WHERE TOWN AND COUNTRY MEET

JAMES BUCKHAM

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By

JAMES BUCKHAM

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JAMES BUCKHAM.

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WHERE TOWN AND COUNTRY MEET

INDIAN SPRING

SOMETIMES in January, oftener toward the close of February, there comes to our winter-bound Northern States a day or two, perhaps a week, of balmy, springlike weather, that uncovers the brown earth and sets the streams a-brawling, and makes one think that verily old winter's fetters have been broken. The sun has such a genial, steady warmth, and the south or southwest breeze is so soft and caressing and assuring, that even some premature vegetation starts up in the sheltered ditches and under the swampy lee of the woods, unfolding its tender, vivid green in a few hours, only to

be smitten by returning cold erelong, and stretched withering on the frost-hardened soil.

Were it not for the absence of the wiser birds, and the unnatural silence of the sunny air, one might readily mistake this brief Indian spring for the first week in April; but, except for the short, sharp cries or chirps of the few birds that winter with us, the feathered world is unresponsive to all this unseasonable warmth and balminess. There is no sudden northward migration, no sound by night from the pilgrims of the air. This is the surest sign to the rambler that spring is still a long way off, and he need cherish no romantic hopes of a season two months in advance of the calendar. Nevertheless, no true lover of nature can remain indoors during Indian spring. He has an irresistible longing to go forth and get, at least, a foretaste, a suggestion, of the April that is to be. There is actually a spicy pleasure in cheating himself by appearances, while all the time shrewdly reserving the knowledge that the semblance is not real. It is much the same kind of pleasure that a dreamer might have in his dream, were his

subconsciousness strong enough to perceive that his adventures were phantasmal and transitory, and need cause him no anxiety or moral distress. Indeed, the impression of tramping through April scenes in February is distinctly dreamlike, and for that very reason enchanting. I love to spend whole days in this deceptive sunshine, with that ever-present, ghostly consciousness of being translated beyond actual place and time—of being, in fact, a partly-awake somnambulist in the night of the year. It gives me a certain shuddering delight to stand doubtingly in April sunshine, walled about on every side by cliffs of winter, like Rasselas in his idyllic valley. For to-day, at least, I will live and think as if spring had actually come—only the charm of it will be the more delicate and exciting, because I know (behind my fancying) that winter has just slipped out for a moment, and will presently darken the door and take possession of the house again.

Last year (1899), in Massachusetts at least, we had our Indian spring in the middle of January. That week of mild, sunny weather, beginning with the 15th,

is still gratefully fresh in the minds of many of us, no doubt—particularly the golfers, who were out in force, like reprieved prisoners, tramping the snowless turf of the links. On the 17th, with the thermometer in the 50's, I took a long walk, out through Wollaston, toward the Milton Hills. The warmth of the sun and the softness of the air were simply delicious, and I could not help pitying all those who were shut up, on so fine a day, in offices, stores, and factories.

On the edge of the swamp lying just west of Wollaston Heights, I startled a small flock of bluejays, three or four, that went screaming away into the depths of the woods. Unless disturbed, the bluejay is usually silent at this season of the year, his loud, metallic cry being seldom heard later than the 1st of December. The flicker, however, whose voice I presently heard from a distant pine-tree, is a spring prophet, and in pleasant weather may be heard blowing his bugle over the winter woods, like a clarion call to the sun. His note at this season is single, strong, and resonant, with a reedy quality, something like the tone of

the clarinet. This bird is noticeably shyer in winter than at any other season, and will fly long before you can get near him, uttering, as he undulates over the woods or fields, the same strident note that first announced his presence.

After walking about a mile, I came to a warm, southward-facing bank, where the roots of a pine-tree were thrusting up above the brown earth, like withered limbs that had thrown off the bedclothing. Glad of a chance to rest, I sat down on one of the knees of the old tree, and gratefully inhaled the aromatic, resinous odor that filled the air. This pine smell is the most distinctive and appealing of wood odors. It lingers longest in the memory, and is revived with the keenest and most affecting pleasure. How strongly the resinous fragrance pours forth on a day like this, when the sun opens wide the pores of the lusty tree! Roots, trunk, and foliage all exhale the wholesome odor, and it streams away on the air, greeting your quickened sense afar off. Nothing like a whiff of pines to call up out-door memories! It is the most distinctive aroma of the woods, a divine

exhalation penetrating through the senses to the inmost soul.

A little distance from where I sat resting on the root of the pine, was a tumble-down, tangled barbed-wire fence, overgrown by the long vines of the trailing green brier. The strands of wire and the brier vines were almost indistinguishable, and it suddenly occurred to me that here was an instance of the natural association of type and prototype. Approaching closer, I was struck by the remarkable resemblance between the vines and the wire. The latter was just about the same size as the former, and bore its clusters of radiating barbs at precisely the same intervals as the thorns of the vines. The barbs and the thorns were arranged similarly, in bunches of three or four, bristling opposite ways, and of about the same size, though nature's barbs were the neater and finer and sharper-pointed. Surely, I thought, man must have got his notion of the barbed-wire fence from nature, and he has followed his model so closely that, if nature were allowed patents, the infringement would be ground for legal action.

Beyond the golf links, on a hillside where scattered birches and scrub pines were growing, I came upon a stunted wild apple-tree, the ground under which was thickly strewn with frozen and thawed apples. Immediately there occurred to me Thoreau's enthusiastic praise of the spicy cider of thawed wild apples. Gathering my hands full of the russet fruit, I sat down upon a rock to taste this primitive nectar (as Thoreau recommends) "in the wind." It was indeed delicious—not so tart and bitter as the juice of the wild apple in its sound state, but distinctly sweetened and ameliorated by the frost; a kind of spicy wild wine, innocent as water, refreshing to the palate, and wholesome and medicinal to the entire body. I gathered more and more of the wild apples, and sucked their cool nectar until my thirst was slaked. It was a real discovery, this new winter drink, and I would heartily pass on Thoreau's recommendation of it to other ramblers.

I ate my noonday lunch by a spring in the Blue Hills Reservation, and then kept on across that vast park toward the Observatory, standing up like a huge excres-

cence on the brow of the highest point of land in sight.

What an extent of wild land is this, on the borders of Boston, stretching away for miles to the south and southwest, as remote and uncultivated as New Hampshire pastures (save for an occasional roadway or placard), and as free to all of the rambling tribe! It affords a deep and grateful refuge for the birds, and in a few months now will be thickly peopled by all our native songsters.

I saw there, on that day in mid-January, representatives of nearly all our wintering birds—the chickadees, nuthatches, downy and hairy woodpeckers, flickers, jays, buntings, winter wrens and pine finches, and, along the turnpike, some English sparrows. Indian spring had brought them all out from the deeper coverts, and set them to foraging hopefully for food. Their feeble, tinkling chirps and rustling flight attracted my attention everywhere, and it was easy to imagine what a bird garden the Reservation would be when May came north with her retinue of songsters.

The only disagreeable feature of ram-

bling in the Reservation is the conscious espionage of the mounted police, who patrol the park at all seasons of the year. Of course, one does not like to have one's motive suspected while engaged in this devout processional or peripatetic worship of nature. Yet the police are, doubtless, necessary to enforce the regulations of the park commissioners and protect the timber and wild creatures in the Reservation. One wishes they might be invisible wardens, however—visible only to the wrongdoer, and relentless upon his trail as some four-footed, or indeed six-footed, Nemesis.

My walk circumscribed a section of country about eight miles in diameter, and was a fairly good day's work for one pair of legs. But I would gladly repeat it, should we have a taste of Indian spring this year. It furnished me with an inextinguishable appetite for some days, and at least a week's supply of keen, swinging energy for work. I do not know how I could have got better returns from so small an investment of time in any other venture.

ON THE EDGE OF SPRING

Some one has said that expectation is to realization what flower is to fruit; the first yields a finer fragrance, the second a more satisfying sustenance. If this be true—and to whom does it not commend itself?—how thankful we should be that we receive, with most of our blessings, the possibility of both enjoyments! The coming event casts, not its shadow, but its *brightness,* before. (How many of our proverbs ought to be amended by restating them from the optimistic standpoint!)

The expectation of spring is one of the most delicate and truly fragrant delights possible to a healthy mind and body. The genius of the season is itself anticipatory; its atmosphere is elate, prophetic, suggestive, inviting. More than that of any other season, the charm of spring is elusive and alluring. It has that fine, spiritual, ungraspable quality that belongs to the best music

and poetry. Spring is the beckoner among the seasons. We never quite get hold of her hand, as we do of Summer's, and Autumn's, and particularly Winter's. Our wooing of her is ever the delight of pursuit. All her kisses are blown to us.

To me, the most ethereal and delicious moment of this pursuit of spring is the time when, as we say, spring is first "in the air." The expectation of the new, budding year is never quite so thrilling, so transporting—Thoreau calls it "exciting"—as then. That first changing of the air, in late February and early March, from the winter quality to the spring quality—have you not remarked it with all your senses, and been mysteriously and irresistibly elated and exalted thereby, as if body and soul were suddenly set in perfect tune with the music of the spheres? And that earliest whiff of the soil—is there any perfume to compare with it in delicious suggestiveness? How it recalls all the sweet youthfulness of life and nature! As Henry Van Dyke so charmingly says: "Of all the faculties of the human mind, memory is the one that is most easily led by the nose." I

know of nothing like the smell of the soil to bring back the zestful, care-free days of boyhood, and to thrill the soul with intimations and prophecies of its own and nature's eternal youth.

The edge of spring may be described by a somewhat wavering and intermittent line in these North Atlantic States—a line that extends between the middle of February and the middle of March. In some seasons you will encounter it two or three weeks earlier than in others; and often during the same season it will appear and disappear, and reappear again, like forked lightning in the night sky. But as a general thing, the first real and continuous intimations of spring begin with the last week in February. Then you will readily detect those sky changes and air changes and earth changes that herald the season when, as Wordsworth sings:

"The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay."

No sign of spring, at this early date, is pronounced and positive, but on every hand are those delicate promises, those thrilling

premonitions, that are so sweet and vital a part of this most beloved of seasons. This year (1901) I took my first spring walk on the 19th day of February. It was just after that long-continued period of extremely cold weather, when for eighteen successive days the mercury hovered about the zero mark. The returning warmth of the sun and genial mildness of the air were especially grateful, and I was not surprised to find that the sudden, sweet promise of spring had appealed to more legitimate proprietors of the woods and fields than myself. All wild life seemed to be astir, that sunny morning. The crows were disporting themselves high in air, in amatory flights, darting over and under one another, and uttering those peculiar cries characteristic of their mating season. It is almost impossible to describe these curious love notes of the crow, so odd and varied are they; but some of them sounded to me like the strident croaks of guinea hens. I doubt if there is any Northern bird that begins its lovemaking and nestmaking as early as our common crow. The crow's love song is anything but musical, but it is always sweet to my ears, be-

cause it forms a part of the melodic prophecy of spring.

I had scarcely entered the woods when in the crumbling, disintegrating snow I found the wiry, nervous, wandering tracks of a ruffed grouse, which had evidently been abroad that very morning, far earlier than I, to seek a breakfast of leaves and berries on the knolls uncovered by the heat of the sun. I followed the winding trail for some distance, but finally it so turned, and doubled, and intertwined with itself, that I lost my clue and had to give it up.

Everywhere, from the trustworthy record of the snow, it appeared that the squirrels had been on the move likewise, passing from tree to tree with long, joyous leaps, the vigor of spring already in their veins. Many rabbit tracks through the thickets showed where the cotton-tails also had chased each other, like those black lovers in midair. All this awakening and new activity seemed a part of the glad expectation of spring.

The skunk-cabbage was thrusting its spear point up through the black loam along the brook—earliest of all the wild sod-

breakers. I found the alder-buds swelling beneath their scales, and the catkins of both alders and willows already visible. There was bright green cress in the bed of the brook, and a few spears of green grass lifted themselves out of the loam in a sheltered, sunny corner of the swamp. Chickadees were lisping their faint *dee-dee-dee* in the hemlocks; jays were screaming lustily among the dwarf oaks; and a yellow-hammer sent forth his clarion challenge from the hillside. Everywhere the decomposing snow was black with myriads of tiny, sputtering snow-lice, that darted hither and thither like sparks out of a fire. Surely, spring was in the air and underfoot! It was good to be abroad at the first whisper of her coming.

Such signs would mean little, if they did not mean so much. In themselves they carry little of positive assurance of spring. But who could receive them, in the full consciousness of their prophetic significance, without a thrill of joy that was almost ecstatic? They tell us that nature is waking from her deathlike sleep, that her chains are crumbling, and that soon she will rise

up, and fling their fragments into the brooks and rivers, and start forth to clothe the world in flowers and whistle up the bird-songs! Happy is he who can find time and heart to stand on the edge of spring, and listen for the coming of the birds and the flowers. If he realizes the full sweetness of anticipation, he will be content to wait long even for the first spray of pink arbutus and the first rapture of the robin's vesper hymn.

AN EARLY SPRING WALK

At noon, yesterday, April 7th, as I was crossing the town common, I got the first smell of the soil—that indescribably fresh, damp odor that thrills all one's nerves as with the very touch of spring. Here and there huge snow-banks were still lying, dirty and ragged, like mammoth cattle that had "wintered out;" and the light breeze blowing from the north had the tang of frost in it yet. But I could not resist that intoxicating odor of the earth. It waked something in my heart as restless and wild and undaunted as the sprout of the frost-breaking crocus, and I perforce dedicated the rest of the day to the fields and wood-edges.

Immediately after dinner—the New Englander's good, old-fashioned, noonday dinner—I was off across the pastures to the eastward, my rubber boots splashing through the puddles of snow water that still sparkled in little hollows of the frost-bound soil. The sun lay warm and cheery over

all the landscape, and the breeze had just enough frost in it to be delicious to the nostrils, as well as bracing. The song-sparrows were lifting up their sweet thank-offerings everywhere, by altars of bush and stone, and now and then I heard the clarion of the robin from some neighboring orchard. On a fence post sat a solitary bluebird, but he was silent—depressed, apparently, at having arrived so long before his fellows. It would be some days yet, I imagined, before I should hear his jubilant strain.

Straggling crows were drifting southward, overhead, scolding me with harsh, suspicious caws. The crow is the most "canny" and sophisticated of all our wild birds. He suspects all mankind, and even womankind, of carrying guns up their sleeves, and being banded in a perpetual league to lay him low. No range, however long, seems to promise him immunity from the deadly bullet, and he starts his hoarse alarmist cry if he spies a human figure a mile away.

Before I came to the edge of the woods I was in a glow from exercise, and the blood coursed in my veins like liquid fire.

It was a part of the natural exhilaration of all life at the return of the spring. I feel it distinctly every season—this rejuvenation and re-enforcement of all my vital powers and functions. It is as pronounced with me as with the plants and the trees; a flooding upward and outward to the very finger tips and pores of the scalp of the sap of life; a vernal flood tide of health and energy and hope and delight in existence. All animals, I think, feel it more or less, and all men in proportion as they share the life of nature and are in sympathy and communion with her. Farmers, hunters, boatmen, explorers, surveyors, ramblers—these out-of-door men know what is meant by the exaltation and exhilaration of the spring. They have all felt this rushing vernal sap in their veins, and that transporting thrill, which seems to exude at last in a fine spray from every extremity. Even up to old age such men renew their boyhood every spring. Their hearts swell within them; their muscles grow elastic and tireless, so that they seem to walk on air; their bodies glow and palpitate, and their spirits respond to all bird songs and brook music. It is

the universal, perpetual rejuvenation of the spring; and so long as we can share it, we are not old, but still belong to the youth and enthusiasm and fecundity of nature.

Even so early as the first week in April, with frost still lingering in the open fields and snow littering the woods to their very edges, the first rambler of the season will find some few hardy wild flowers, either with half-open buds or in brave full bloom. I saw, on this crisp April day, even before I came to the southward-sloping bank beneath the woods, what looked like a delicate mat of ladies' veils, or a gigantic, iridescent spider's web spread out in the sun, and knew it to be a densely clustered bed of the grayish-blue Houstonia, or bluets. There they trembled in the wind, those exquisite frail flowers, like little mouse-ears raised aloft on swaying stalks. How fragile! At a little distance they looked like a puff of smoke that the wind must presently drive away. And yet they are so hardy as to survive frosts and even late snowstorms. I have pulled them out of the snow, as fresh and unwilted and shining as the hour they broke the sod. Indeed,

nearly all the early spring flowers are noticeably delicate in texture and fragile and dainty in form. The coarser, apparently stronger, flowers come later. It is one of those paradoxes of which inscrutable nature is so fond. She loves to astonish us by sending up her whitest lily out of the black mire, and setting her most fragile, baby-like flowers on the edge of a snowbank.

I picked some of the most vividly pink arbutus blossoms, on this same afternoon, along the edge of the woods. None so fragrant and so richly tinted will be found later. The pure white blossoms predominate as the season advances, larger and creamier and more cloyingly sweet in perfume than the pink firstlings, but not so delicate, so blushingly beautiful, and so spicily fragrant. I found also a few tiny golden saucers of cinquefoil, timid and pinched, as if regretful of having opened so soon.

Every run I crossed, and every swampy place under the edge of the woods, had from two to a dozen of the sharp-pointed, purplish spathes of the skunk-cabbage thrusting up

through the wet soil. The hood of the spathe had, since it first broke the ground in March, lifted visibly, and the sides expanded, bulging outward, so as to reveal the small, pale clusters of minute flowers, protected until now by the warm-colored and tightly-closed blanket of the spathe.

Almost constantly, as I strolled along the edge of the woods, I could hear the silvery chimes of the hylas, those tiny wood-frogs which inhabit the pools and marshes, and jingle their strings of sleigh-bells (for the music, at a little distance, sounds exactly like sleigh-bells) from the 1st of April until the middle of May. There is no sound, to me, so delightful, so suggestive, so characteristic and typical of early spring, as the chirping of the hylas. It unites the early and the later season, for it has a tinkle like the dripping and clashing of icicles, and a melodious, flowing music like released brooks and the voices of birds. I should feel lost and desolate without my sleigh-bells in the spring. The first pipe of the hyla is more delicious to me than a whisper from Remenyi's violin, and when there comes an answer, gradually

swelling into an irregular, vibrant chorus, my heart tastes again, for a little while, the unnamable ecstasy of childhood, and I can believe that I am standing once more on the morning threshold of the world.

Every sight and sound and odor of the early spring seems to possess a peculiar significance and charm, such as is revealed to the lover of nature at no other season of the year. All reports of the senses teem with freshness, newness, pungency, promise.

"The year 's at the spring,"

sings Browning; and in that single line he conveys an almost overwhelming sense of the fullness of life, hope, joy, energy, courage, determination. Just as there is one day in every month when the sea floods up irresistibly and touches its highest tide-mark, so there is one month in the year when the life of nature climbs to its maximum, and thrills the whole world with a sense of vital repletion and power. April is the month of all months to go rambling, for one's health of body and mind, because it is then we may embark upon that mysterious flood-tide of reviving nature, and share the exaltation

and exhilaration of all organic and sentient life. Before the grass is green on the hills, or the mist of early leafage dims the swamp, take your stout staff, rambler, and go a-field. Then, though your hair be gray, you will find yourself wandering blissfully back to boyhood, and standing again on some sunrise-hill, with the whole world swimming in morning gold beneath your feet.

THE WAKING OF THE FISHES

It is a pity that so many lovers and students of nature pay little or no attention to "the water under the earth." Birds and flowers are studied with enthusiasm by thousands, but the animal and vegetable life of the water—particularly the animal life—seems to be overlooked or disregarded, as belonging to a foreign element. This is unfortunate, because there is so much of rare and surprising interest in the study of water-life—so many revelations of the wonders of God's creation, so many glimpses into the marvelous resources and adaptabilities of nature. The life of the water is not only fascinating in its own body of facts, but it is full of surprises and suggestions, now in the way of contrast with the life of earth and air, and now in curious correspondence with it. The study of fishes in particular is most fascinating; and I do not know how the mind of a beginner in nature-

study could be more stimulated and broadened than by making a series of observations simultaneously upon fishes and birds. These two great kingdoms are strangely alike and yet unlike. Their contrasts and correspondences are more interesting than any romance, and there is an endless delight in discovering and bringing out new points, both of striking divergence and likeness.

The waking of the fishes in the spring is a most charming chapter to study in connection with the return of the birds. I suppose there is scarcely one person in fifty who knows that many tribes of fishes, as well as of birds, migrate to warmer waters during the winter, and return, at the same time with the birds, to lay eggs and even build nests as they do. But this is a fact long ago established by scientists; and there may be, if we choose, great delight in knowing and taking advantage of it.

April is distinctively the month of waking and activity with the fishes, just as it is with the birds; and from then until the middle or latter part of May is the time when both tribes may be studied with the greatest profit and delight. Any one who

lives in the vicinity of brooks, rivers, or ponds, and particularly of streams flowing into the sea, may be sure of rich returns from time spent, during the month of April, in observing the fishes. All waters are then alive with them, while the great instinct and necessity of reproduction is stimulating them to utmost activity, and at the same time bringing out their most interesting habits.

Let us glance first at the migratory habits of some of our commoner fishes, such as may be found, during the warmer months of the year, in almost any stream larger than a rivulet. Do such fish, for instance, as the perch, the sucker, the sunfish, the bass, the pike, and the brook trout, ever migrate? It is the common impression, I am aware, that they do not, and yet a careful study of their habits proves them to be what we call, among the birds, "semi-migrants." That is to say, these fishes pass down from the higher waters of streams to the lower and warmer waters, and very often into larger streams or into ponds and lakes, returning with the waking season in the spring to the shallower waters, where they breed and

spend the first half of the year—counting spring as its beginning.

Every country boy knows, for example, something about the spring migration of the suckers; and when you see him starting out with his "gigging-pole," or his rod and line, you may be pretty sure that the suckers are beginning to run up some brook that he wots of. So it is also with the brook trout, the gamy and delicious and highly prized *salmo fontinalis,* as your experienced angler well knows. In April the trout come swarming up the smaller rivers and streams from which they have migrated during the winter. They are coming up to spawn, and to remain until fall, when the downward pilgrimage again begins. The well-informed and skillful angler meets them on their spring migration, when the law allows him to take them. In the fall, however, the season is closed legally, ostensibly because it is spawning time, though as a matter of fact the spawning of brook trout takes place about midway between the spring and fall migrations.

The black bass is another instance of a fish that migrates to deeper water late in

the season; and fishermen through the ice of ponds and lakes can testify to the great increase in the number of perch, pickerel, etc., during the winter, as these fishes come out from the ponds and creeks to warmer and more protected depths. And so I think we may claim that there is a semi-migration of many of our commoner fishes twice a year, just as there is of robins, bluejays, crows, flickers, and other familiar birds, that do not entirely leave the temperate zone in their search for a warmer climate in winter. Here, then, is one pleasing correspondence between birds and fishes—that a certain number of both tribes are limited or semi-migrants.

A further and more marked correspondence may be observed in the case of certain salt-water fishes, particularly those that spawn in fresh-water streams—the anadromous fishes, so called. These fishes make extended southward migrations, just as the majority of birds do, and return at the same season in the spring—the great waking and home-returning month of April. At the same time that the mighty army of birds is speeding northward, what we might

call the fleet of the fishes is accompanying them along the coast; and we may trace the progress of the latter by the successive dates when they ascend the coast streams, beginning to do this as early as January in the Savannah River, and continuing gradually northward, until the New England Coast streams receive them in April and early May. The names of these fresh-water breeding migrants among the fishes are familiar to nearly all dwellers along the coast—the herrings, alewives, shad, and salmon. But hosts of other sea-fishes, that do not spawn in fresh water, are migratory, and come northward at the same time with the birds, only we can not trace their journeyings as exactly as we can those of the anadromous fishes.

Now let us turn for a moment to that other curiously bird-like habit of certain fishes, when they, like the birds, are waking to the joys and responsibilities of family life; namely, nest-building. The majority of fishes, to be sure, like some birds, lay their eggs without providing any nests for them, but certain species are very particular about the homes and safeguards of their off-

spring. The rock bass and the two varieties of black bass are well-known examples. These fishes scoop out a hole with their fins in the bottom of the stream, and then bring pebbles or small stones to the bowl-like cavity, to which the female attaches her spawn, mounting guard over the nest until the eggs hatch, which is generally within ten days. Any offending object dropped upon or near the nest is promptly and indignantly removed.

The sunfish, or "pumpkin seed," also scoops out a nest in the bottom of the stream, but does not ballast it with pebbles. Her nest is large and deep, however, and built in comparatively still water, where the unattached eggs are not likely to be carried away by the current. The female not only watches over the eggs till they are hatched, but drives away every intruder, even of her own species, that ventures to approach the spot.

The stickleback's nest, however, is the most remarkable of all fish nests, most like a bird's nest, being built of grass and weeds, fastened together with slime from the fish's own body. There is a hole entirely through

the nest, from one side to the other, provided in order that water may constantly flow over the eggs. In the case of the stickleback, curiously enough, it is the male that builds and defends the nest.

The correspondences between bird and fish life which I have hastily sketched, serve to show what a fascinating study may be made of the inhabitants of the water, if one is willing to devote the necessary time and attention to the subject. I might mention other water-tribes besides the fishes whose life history is full of interest and wonder. But my object is accomplished, if I have in any degree induced other students of Nature to look into those crystal wonder-depths for themselves, and especially at a time so rich in all the operations of life, and so fruitful in disclosures and surprises, as the joyous month of April.

IN ANGLING TIME

With the breaking forth of the buds in spring there is a certain primitive and inextinguishable passion that breaks forth in the hearts of men. It is the well-nigh universal desire to go a-fishing. There is no other outdoor longing that seems to possess so generally all ages and conditions of mankind. The savage still survives in most of us to this gentle degree, that, after the long semi-hibernation, which even our modern life scarcely modifies, we must needs go forth at the time when Nature liberates all her creatures once more, and replenish our larders, material and immaterial, from the bounties of lake and stream. Man and boy—and to a growing extent woman also—are seized in spring by that deliciously imperative feeling that it is time to "wet a line." The "most grave and reverend senior" puts on an old suit of clothes and a soft, faded hat, and humbly stoops beside

the eager boy to gather bait out of the garden loam. And then man and boy trudge off together, rods in hand, with a sense of such perfect companionship and sympathy as is worth far more than its weight in abandoned dignity or forfeited toil.

It is when this temperate zone of ours, and these rugged landscapes to which most of us are accustomed, are all pink and white and fragrant with the blossoms of orchards, that angling time is at its height. Old fishermen say that it is little use to wet a line for trout until you can smell the apple blossoms. I have angled for all kinds of fresh-water fish, from the time when the ice first went out until the law forbade, but I have never had any success worth mentioning (except with the cold-blooded and phlegmatic sucker) until the fruit-trees were fully in bloom, and their sweetness was blown into my face on puffs of air as warm as a draught from a florist's conservatory. Not until then does the water of our lakes and streams lose enough of its winter chill to wake its inhabitants fairly out of their torpidity. The trout, generally speaking, will not rise to a fly until June, nor pay

much attention even to the seductive worm until the 1st of May. And, to a less marked degree, other fresh-water fish are sluggish during the same period. But when those first spring heats come on, which make you think that even midsummer will scarcely bring you a greater desire to "sit in your bones," then is the halcyon time to go a-fishing. Then is the time when, if you are a true angler born and bred, to be chained down to desk or shop or classroom will make you actually sick in body as well as in mind. The angler who reads these lines will not smile, I am sure, at the confession that I once had a serious fit of sickness brought on not otherwise than by a persistently thwarted longing to get to the woods in angling time. Circumstances were such that I could not leave my post of duty even for a day; but the struggle to smother my passion was so severe that, after the witching time had passed, my system collapsed, and I was perforce a non-producer for three months. Three days of fishing would have saved me three months' time—the more 's the pity! It was the being unable to go at all that laid me low. I appeal

not to the uninitiated for sympathy, but every genuine angler will understand.

Now, then, let us see what a day in angling time is worth. You wake up very early in the morning to the concert of birds, and a sweet thrill like that of boyhood's time runs through you at the thought of the day's enterprise. You are out of bed at a leap, and presently slip into that old suit, so comfortable in every wonted fold, so redolent with pleasant memories. The boy hears you—the blessed boy, renewer of your youth—and soon he, too, is out of dreamland and out of bed, staggering a little, and with fists dug into his blinking eyes, but bravely dragging out his old clothes and hunting for his thick waterproof shoes.

Then, while the smiling helpmate prepares an early breakfast, you and the boy go out to dig worms, and come back with overflowing bait-boxes and such appetites as neither of you has displayed for weeks. Breakfast is a feast, sweetened by expectation; and when it is finished you get your gear together, whistling, while mother puts up a generous lunch. Then off you start, to be gone the whole day; and as you trudge

down the street, between bird-peopled trees, it seems somehow as if you had been born again that morning—as if you had entered anew into the freshness and sweetness and young hope of life. Your heart is as light as the boy's, and they flow together like two streams from which the separating barrier has been broken down.

The walk to the woods is full of pleasant talk and warm confidences. No father, I think, has ever quite known his boy until he has gone fishing with him. Nor has any boy known his father until they have shared such companionship. Blessed is the man whose soul does not become infected with the senescence of his body! It is a pitiful fate, I think, for a soul to grow old like bones and muscles.

Then, when you have come to the stream in the odorous balsam woods, and the roar of it drowns all your talk, and you have little means of communicating thenceforth save by gestures, you rig your tackle, and put on a worm, and settle down to the solid enjoyment of the day. You let the boy go on ahead down stream, to have the first cast in the likely holes, and you follow, now

keeping your absorbed disciple just in sight, and now losing him for a space around a bend in the stream. Now and then he holds up to you, in eloquent silence, some eight or ten inch prize, gleaming where the sun sifts down between the young leaves. You nod and smile, and thank God for the innocent mutual joys of life and nature.

Presently, you are absorbed in the struggle with a crimson-spotted "pounder" yourself, and by the time you have tired him out and landed him the boy is too far away to share your triumph. Perhaps you do not see him again until an ever-increasing admonition beneath the belt slackens his steps, and you come upon him sitting on a stone beside a cool brooklet that slips into your trout stream; and his first audible question is: "Father, is n't this a pretty good place to eat our lunch?"

Yes, a wonderfully good place!—though it is barely eleven o'clock yet. So down you two sit, side by side on the flat rock, with the drinking-cup between you, and prove the inexpressible deliciousness of home-made sandwiches, doughnuts, and

pie, sauced with the wild hunger of the woods.

In the middle of the golden afternoon you unjoint your rods, slip them into their cases, gather some fresh ferns, and sit down by the stream to wash your trout, count them, and lay them daintily back in their bed of ferns. It has been a sweet, happy day, and you have taken fish enough for a good meal on the home table, and for grandfather and grandmother, and for Uncle Ned's folks. Let us be thankful for God's bounty, and not abuse it. Now for a little rest and more happy talk by the cool water. Then we will tramp home by another road through fresh scenes; and as we near the village the same birds that sang us forth with their matins will welcome us sweetly back with their vespers. What a good world it is! How it beats with the heart of God—if only one listens always as closely and as lovingly as one does in angling time!

SOME HERMITS OF THE MARSH

RETURNING home from a long April walk, the other day, I heard, as I was plodding across a willow-bordered causeway that crossed a marsh, a sound like one pumping water from a well with an old-fashioned, wheezy, wooden pump. There was no house in sight anywhere, and the marsh was wide and deserted, yet I instinctively looked in the direction of the sound, half expecting to see some bare-armed country girl pumping a pitcherful of water for the supper-table, or a thirsty farm laborer, with one hand over the nozzle of the pump-spout, bending down to drink the cool stream that spurted from his fingers. But in a moment I knew that the deceptive sound I had heard was made by the bittern, or "stake-driver," a large, shy, ungainly bird of the wader family, that tenants remote marshes, and seldom shows itself in the open or upon the wing, unless startled from its muddy retreat by the gunner or the

mower on the marsh. When thus alarmed, it rises awkwardly and heavily, craning its neck in all directions, and uttering a hoarse, croaking note. The bird is a powerful flyer, however, when once fairly on the wing. It often rises to a considerable height, and flies a long distance before again settling in the marsh.

The odd, far-sounding note of the bittern, when undisturbed, has been variously likened by writers on ornithology to the driving of a stake into moist, soft ground—as the common name of the bird indicates—to the hollow coughing of an old wooden pump, and to the rattling stroke of a pair of loose "pin-oars" on a scow. Like all bird-sounds, the note represents different things to different ears, and is hard to describe with exactness. It resembles in a general way all three of the sounds to which it is commonly likened, and yet it has a cadence and quality and character of its own that are quite distinct from any of them. To me, it always suggests the sound of the old pump back of my uncle's house in the country, where I used to spend all my vacations as a boy. The first hollow, guttural

a-unk, a-unk, fairly makes me thirsty, and my fingers itch for the rusted tin dipper that used to convey such nectar to my parched lips.

Comparatively little is really known, as yet, of the habits of what might be called our "hermit-birds," like the bittern, the rail, the mud-hen, the Wilson's snipe, the woodcock, and the whip-poor-will. Most people, I imagine, even those who are fond of bird-study, would have to confess that they have never seen all of these comparatively common birds, alive, in their native haunts. Some, I am quite sure, would have to admit that they have never seen *one* of them. Even professional ornithologists have found difficulty in collecting what scientific data they have concerning these bird hermits. There is much still to be learned about them, so that the study of their habits, when possible, is full of fresh interest and stimulus.

I wonder if any bird student who reads this chapter has ever tried to "stalk" a bittern in a marsh, while it was uttering its peculiar, booming cry? It is a more delicate and difficult piece of business by far than stalking a drumming ruffed grouse in

the woods. You must go very slowly and noiselessly, advancing only when the bird is engaged in the all-engrossing task of "disgorging" its deep-drawn, laborious note, for the "stake-driver" has a sharp eye as well as a keen ear, and a neck sufficiently long to enable him to peer over the top of the marsh-grass. But, if you have patience and caution, you may at length trace him to the spot where he stands in the long swamp-grass beside some shallow ditch or muddy pool, watching for tiny frogs, tadpoles, or the fry of fresh-water fish. Here he will feed all day long, unless disturbed, uttering occasionally his gulping *a-unk, a-unk,* with a visible effort, as if vomiting it up. Were it not for that advertisement of his presence, you might live all summer near the edge of a swamp, and never suspect that there was such a bird in it.

The rail, another marsh-dweller, is still more of a hermit and hider than the bittern, because he is not only a skulker, but an entirely silent bird as well. You may come upon him suddenly, while pushing through the sedgy border of some fresh-water pond. He will jump up within a

few feet of you, absolutely noiselessly, without report of voice or wing, and drift slowly along over the tops of the reeds like a dead leaf. Then he will drop down again, with comical suddenness, and vanish from sight. His appearance is altogether ghostlike and eerie. When the reeds have swallowed him up once more you almost question whether your senses have not deceived you—whether you have not seen a shadow instead of a bird. Yet the rail is very common on our marshes, especially during the summer. He arrives late in the spring, breeds with us, and then returns southward quite early in the fall. A squat little figure is his, with the legs set well back, like those of all the waders. He has an enormous foot, in proportion to the size of his body, the long, spreading toes acting as a kind of mud-shoe to bear him up and enable him to run swiftly over the soft slime in which he seeks his food. His coloring is rather pretty, or would be, if its variegated shades—greenish brown above, and ashy blue with white markings beneath—were more pronounced and less blurred. In size the rail is a little smaller than a robin, but being bob-tailed

and having less spread of wing, it appears considerably smaller when in flight.

The mud-hen is a cousin of the rail, and the habits and general appearance of the two birds are much alike, though the mud-hen is four or five times the larger. The mud-hen, with its bluish-black plumage and thick-set head and neck, reminds one of the common crow, except that its posterior anatomy is that of a wader. It is about the size of a crow, and has a croaking note that is not unlike a suppressed caw. Often, when I have been rowing or paddling on some sluggish stream that winds through the marshes, I have seen the black, shadowy figure of the mud-hen appear and disappear around some grass-grown tussock on the border of the stream. It is a remarkably shy bird, and a very swift runner. My dog has sometimes spied one of them in the marsh, swum ashore, and taken up its trail with puppyish eagerness, only to be outrun and easily evaded by the nimble mud-hen, so securely at home in the winding, watery avenues of its natural Venice.

The Wilson's snipe, or English snipe, is another mysterious hermit of the marsh.

A beautiful bird he is, too, somewhat resembling the woodcock in contour and plumage, but of slighter build. He arrives in our northern latitude about the latter part of April, commonly in flights of from a score to a hundred birds. The flock settles down in some large, fresh-water marsh, pairs off, and begins breeding about the middle of May. You would never suspect that there were some hundreds of this choice and highly prized game-bird in the marsh lying so silent under the midday sun. But if you had been on the edge of the marsh a little before sunrise, you might have heard, high in air, a most tender, sweet, minor note, now swelling loud, now dying away, like the distant sound of a shepherd's whistle in the Scotch mountains. This is the spring love-note of the male snipe. The bird utters it, larklike, high in air, mounting upward with a spiral flight; and then when he has voiced the longing of his heart at the very gate of heaven, he drops down like an arrow to the side of his mate in the marsh. It is well worth a long walk before breakfast to hear this charming, delicate, evanescent love-note of our most idyllic swamp-hermit.

It begins oftentimes in the gray dawn, before you can see the bird at all; and after the sun is fairly up you seldom hear it. The arrow-like drop of the bird, from a height where he is a mere speck in the sky, is a beautiful sight. The beholder wonders how, after all his gyrations, he knows exactly where to drop in that wilderness of marsh to reach the side of his listening love.

If you have a pair of rubber boots, and can endure the severe labor of wading about in the marsh, you may soon flush one or a pair of these snipe. They rise with a hoarse squeak, that suggests the sucking sound of a boot drawn quickly out of the mud, and dart away in swift, twisting flight —"corkscrew," the sportsmen call it—that is verily like "a streak of lightning in feathers." I have seen one of them dodge a hawk in this way, until the fierce bird of prey gave up the chase in despair. Gunners are often foiled by the quick, irregular flight of the snipe, and find it the hardest of all game-birds to bring to bag.

The plumage of the snipe is a beautifully mottled gray and brown, the under parts several shades lighter than the upper. It

is a noticeably graceful bird in form and action, and by far the most attractive of all the hermits of the marsh. With the first frosts in the fall the Wilson's snipe starts once more upon its semi-yearly pilgrimage, journeying toward the far South by easy stages, and running as best it can the gauntlet of fire that meets it all along the route.

PILGRIMS OF THE NIGHT

THE migration of birds is one of the most puzzling secrets of nature. We know very little accurately and scientifically about it, for the excellent reason that the phenomena of these semi-annual pilgrimages are extremely difficult to observe. Birds as a rule migrate in the night, and at such a great height above the surface of the earth that, even in the brightest moonlight, they are seldom visible. The only intimations we have of their passage (save when they cross the disk of the moon) are the faint, eerie, swiftly-vanishing notes that float down to us through the air of a still spring or autumn night. And even these notes, as a discriminating writer on ornithology has pointed out, are of little help in determining the species of bird that may be speeding its way over us at the time, because they are quite different from the ordinary notes uttered while these birds are residents of our woods and fields. Any student of birds who has

paid much attention to these voices of the night, in the migrating season, must have noticed how very much alike in general character they are—commonly a clear, thin, elfin whistle, short in duration, and rapidly repeated, with a sort of unearthly and phantom quality, as if the bird uttering it were in a state of ethereal frenzy, caught away like a spirit through great gulfs of space, and crying to its fellows half in fear and half in rapture.

Many species of birds, especially the smaller songsters, utter migratory cries which are practically indistinguishable from one another. If you happen to be lying awake on a lowery, still, warmish spring night (with your window open, I hope, for no genuine lover of nature is squeamish about night air), you will very likely hear many of these elfin voices out of the sky, beginning faintly, increasing rapidly in volume, and then dying as rapidly away. With the exception of such large and coarse-voiced birds as the water-fowl, the cries of these aerial pilgrims will sound alike to your ear—the same tremulous, thin, clear, rather melancholy whistle, with that transcendent

unearthly quality. This fact has led some writers to query whether there may not be a universal migratory call among the birds of the air, familiar to and understood by all species of songsters, as a sort of rallying cry or exchange of greetings—just as men of all races use salutations that are so much alike as to be perfectly intelligible everywhere.

Be this as it may, we can evidently rely little upon the migratory cries of birds as a means of identifying species; and, as I have said, the flights being chiefly by night, and at a considerable distance above the surface of the earth, it is equally impossible to identify the various species of migrants by sight. The only way we can trace the courses of these flights, in spring and autumn, and determine the species of which they are composed, is to watch for the birds as they descend to earth in the daytime to rest and feed, and then compare records with other observers all along the line. Even in this way we do not get very accurate information of routes and dates of arrival, because there is always more or less confusion arising from the presence of par-

tial or irregular migrants in various localities. Here in Massachusetts, for instance, we are growing more and more uncertain, owing to the relaxing severity of our winters, whether to class certain familiar birds, like robins and yellow-hammers and blue-jays, among the migrants, or not. Certainly, an increasing number of such birds now remain with us for the greater part, if not the whole, of every winter; and we are at a loss to know whether the robin redbreast that we see on the 1st of March is the leader of the migratory vanguard, or only a bird neighbor who has remained with us, silent and secluded, all winter.

However, there is no doubt that the great majority of individuals, as well as of species, among the songsters are still migratory; and the main body of this great army does not return to us in the spring until early in May. The first and second weeks in May are the great "home weeks" for the birds. Then it is that the welcome tide of song and bright plumage comes surging back over our North Atlantic States in one mighty wave. It would seem, in some localities, as if the whole company of birds had

arrived in a night, and stationed themselves before dawn in their accustomed places in the great orchestra, ready to greet the sun with a glorious burst of song when he should lift his face above the hills.

In spite of all vicissitudes of weather, we may look for our little feathered friends upon almost exactly the same dates, year after year. I find that my calendar of bird arrivals varies almost inappreciably from season to season. I have the robin down (for Massachusetts) March 15th to 20th, and seldom fail to see or hear several of them thus early. The bluebirds and song sparrows come next, March 23d to 28th; then blackbirds and fox-sparrows, April 1st to 5th. These are the very early comers. They do not belong to the main body of the great army, which arrives late in April and early in May.

I find that the golden robin is the most punctual and unvarying of all the migrants I have observed. His date for Boston and vicinity is invariably May 10th. If that day is sunny and favorable, I am almost sure to hear him somewhere in the elms about—but not before them. The coincidence

has become so marked as to be almost amusing.

The list of May arrivals among the songsters is a long one, and includes, for New England, the thrushes, wrens, and warblers, all the swallows and swift tribe, the woodpeckers, phœbe, vireos, golden robins, kingbirds, cat-birds, bobolinks, cuckoos, chats, and finches. Nearly all these birds have wintered in the Southern States. Some, however, have gone as far south as Mexico, and a few to South America and the West Indies. Some of the very smallest birds make the longest migratory flights. Thus, a writer in the *Nineteenth Century* calls attention to a diminutive humming-bird, the flame-bearer (*Selasphorus rufus*), which breeds on the west coast of America as far north as Alaska and Bering Island, and winters in Lower California and Mexico, covering in each migration more than three thousand miles.

Probably, three-fourths of our New England birds do not go farther south in the winter than the northern border of the Gulf States. Their line of flight has been pretty definitely traced, in both migrations. It

follows the Atlantic Coast in a broad belt, widening as it extends northward in the spring, and narrowing correspondingly in the fall. The Mississippi Valley and the Pacific Coast are the pathways of the other two great streams of feathered pilgrims, in the United States. For some unexplained reason birds always shape the course of their migrations by large bodies of water—probably because of the guidance which these afford.

One other curious fact should be mentioned concerning our migrating songsters, and that is that the older male birds invariably go ahead, the females and younger birds following somewhat later. The reason for this has never been satisfactorily determined. We may assume that it is the desire of the males somehow to "clear the way" for the females—an expression of that gallantry or chivalry so noticeable among birds. I, for one, should be very loth to believe that the male birds hasten away first, as some men undoubtedly do, to have a good time among themselves before the arrival of their wives and children!

OPENING CAMP

A RED-LETTER day—May 20th. I rode out to the mouth of the river, and opened the little green camphouse for the season. Not that I expect to take up my abode there—though I have had wild thoughts of it—or spend under its tarred roof a tenth part of the busy days yet to come before midsummer vacation. But the prospect of a day off now and then, or a night, out on the edge of those wide, peaceful marshes, with their vibrant lullabies—how it refreshes me! The spin beyond the car-tracks into the gathering dusk, leaving the garish lights of the city far behind; the cool evening breeze in one's face; the first fragrant whiff of the marshes; the faint glimmer of the distant lighthouse; the drowsy croaking of frogs—what immediate restfulness in all these things for the lover of nature, wearied by the strain of city life! The very thought of my little green camphouse

brings rest to me in the midst of toil; and when I can slip away and visit it for a few hours, during the outdoor season, the respite is like a dip in the fountain of perpetual youth.

When I released the brass padlock, and flung open the door of my little camphouse, this morning, the whiff of old associations and delights almost unmanned me—in the sense, I mean, of setting me back to boyhood's days, with their rapture and buoyancy and light-heartedness. To one who has never had any associations of the kind, I suppose, the odor of that tightly-closed cabin would have seemed offensively musty and compounded of innumerable rank and disagreeable smells. But to my discerning nostrils it was more grateful than the spicy gales of the Orient. The impact of each separate odor upon my olfactory nerves brought a shock of delightful remembrance. Every tiniest particle of that impalpable dust, which, scientists tell us, emanates from things smellable, had some exquisite report to make to my brain. Ah! the first whiff of the old camp, when you open it in the spring! Who can describe it? You must

be a camper, born and bred, to appreciate it. Some one has aptly said that the nose is memory's handle. Surely, nothing brings back old sensations, feelings, experiences, with such vividness and poignancy as a lingering odor.

I stepped into the close, sweltering camp, threw open shutters and windows, and sat down on a camp-chair to feast my eyes on well-remembered objects. There, under the bunk opposite, stood the old gray chest, filled with fishing-tackle and other sporting gear. Already my fingers itched to unlock it and overhaul its familiar contents. At the end of the bunk was the table, with its stained oilcloth covering, sugar-bowl, salt and pepper grouped in the center, just as I left them last fall; and at the farther end the little kitchen lamp with its olive-green paper shade.

On the opposite side of the room, in the corner, were stove and wood-box, the little stove red with rust, yet sound and ready for roaring duty at the flash of a match, the wood-box providently overflowing with driftwood and fat pine knots. Nearer at hand was the rude open cupboard, screwed

against the wall, its stout crockery and plebeian tinware waiting patiently to be put to service. Overhead, stretched across the scantling beams, were my fishing-rods, my canoe, and two canvas cots. A sink, with a small square mirror hanging over it, completed the general features of this familiar interior. Is there a camper who does not recognize the picture and love it?

My wife drove out from town, about midforenoon, and found me, already grown ravenous with hunger, washing some potatoes that had sprouted in the sack. "You need n't bother with them," she said. "I have brought a big basketful of lunch. Shall we eat it now?" There could be but one interpretation of the eagerness with which I scrambled for the back end of the carriage; and presently we were sitting on the tiny veranda of our camp, discussing such chicken sandwiches and cold coffee as only deft and loving female fingers can prepare. The sun shone brightly over the broad marshes; the breeze was delicious; and everywhere nature's greens were so fresh and vivid and intense that one beholding them could but feel a twinge of reproach

for all he had ever said in contempt of impressionist painters.

My wife, with a woman's first instinct upon stepping over a threshold, ran her finger along the table-cover, and daintily touched the dishes in the cupboard, as we carried our dirty plates and cups inside.

"Why!" she exclaimed. "Have you been dusting?"

"No, I have not," I replied. "I never do such a thing."

"Is n't it strange?" she went on. "There is n't a particle of dust in camp."

"Dust is something you will not find in unspoiled nature, my dear," I answered. "Civilization, roads, cities, are the dust-breeders. Nature is always tidy. Here, by the marshes and under the trees, she knows nothing of dust."

My wife looked at me incredulously. "I do n't believe it!" she cried, at length. "You want to get me to say that I should like to live here all the year round, and then you would eagerly declare that it should be as I wish. I know you! Now you may take this pail and go down to the river for dish-water."

I took the pail and went, in a kind of dumb awe at the intuition of women. I had indeed cherished, that day, wild, romantic dreams of setting up a permanent domicile in the woods, and riding into town on my wheel every day, to do business. But almost any wild notion may be forgiven a man in the first stages of the annual delirium of camp-fever!

I swung a hammock for my wife, in the afternoon, and she lay there rocking in the breeze like an oriole in her pendent nest. But as for me, I could not spend the day otherwise than in a kind of delicious, aimless puttering about camp. If I sat down for a moment, some imperative task not yet performed was sure to occur to me, and I was up in an instant to set about it. Yet what I actually accomplished neither I nor my wife could definitely declare. The camp and all its surroundings looked precisely the same when we left it, late in the afternoon, as it had when I arrived there, early in the morning. Yet I had been as busy as a spring muskrat all day. "Well, never mind," said my wife, "so long as you are satisfied."

"I *am* satisfied," I declared, stoutly and truthfully. "I have had a delightful day, and I have n't been any farther from camp than the river bank, either. Next time I come, things will be in shape to do something."

I locked my wheel inside the camp and rode home with my wife. The marshes faded away behind, and the city smoke began to stain the sky in front of us.

"After all," said my wife, "without modern civilization and the contrast it affords, should we thoroughly appreciate nature?"

"No!" I replied, gratefully. "You have touched the secret of it, my dear. The brick-front in town is largely responsible for the charm of the little green camphouse by the river."

BIRDS FROM A SUBURBAN WINDOW

My up-stairs study window overlooks a narrow strip of unreclaimed land in a suburban town, five miles from the heart of a great city. This little wildwood patch of mine (I call it mine, though it was sliced into lots, sold and mortgaged, long ago) contains about four acres of low, moist land, grown up to soft maples, birches, and alders. A real country tangle of blackberry bushes, buttonwood, and hardhack covers the ground, except where the alders grow along the brook, and all the year round the birds find in this snug covert shelter, food and nesting-places. I can sit at my south window, and, literally, look down into the private apartments of my feathered neighbors. It is a rare opportunity for one who loves to study birds—a privilege which more than doubles the value of my property to me.

There is hardly a variety of the commoner and more domesticated birds of the

North Atlantic seaboard that does not frequent my swamp and sing under my window. I have identified nearly every bird given in Dr. Coues's tables as proper to this locality, including some of the rarer wood birds, which I supposed never ventured so near the outposts of a large city. But I have learned that even the shyest birds will come into our parks and suburbs if we entice them with the proper natural conditions. A bit of real wildwood anywhere will bring them, but it must be real wildwood, untrimmed and untraversed by orderly paths, left just as it was when nature abandoned it, in her hasty departure to a more congenial dwelling, carelessly overturned, with odds and ends scattered everywhere. The birds do not care how close to our houses they come, so long as we leave them their natural coverts. But there are conservatives among them, who will not be bamboozled by man's so-called improvements upon nature. You could not get such birds to build their nests in a shaved and tonsured park, unless you spread a net over it and imprisoned them there.

Fortunately, nobody has thought it worth

while to do anything to "improve" my swamp. There it lies, in all its unkempt wildness, drawing the birds from near and far, for my own and my neighbors' delight. There has even been some talk among us, dwellers upon its borders, of buying out for a song (as we might) the equities and mortgages and other legal encumbrances upon those swamp lots, and dedicating our birds' paradise to nature *in perpetuum.* I certainly hope we may some time feel rich enough to do it.

From my suburban window I have watched the comings and goings of the birds now for four years. And there is not a month in the year when I have not been richly rewarded for the hours and moments thus spent. Even in the dead of winter the sheltered swamp has scarcely for a single day been untenanted.

I recall, particularly, one very cold Sunday in January, when there was a regular flight of half-frozen and half-starved birds into this cover. Early in the morning, before it was fairly light, I heard the feeble and disconsolate cawing of half a dozen crows, from the southeast corner of the

swamp. When I rose and looked out I saw them huddled there, in two trees, as far away from the cutting edge of the northwest wind as they could get. Every now and then one or another of them would get weakly upon the wing, fly a short distance against the wind, and then return to his perch—exercising, I suppose, to keep his blood in circulation. It reminded me of a cabman, walking to and fro at his stand, and slapping his hands under his arms. These crows staid in the grove most of the day, utterly heedless of passers-by, and complained as distinctly as if in words of their hunger and cold. Their distress was really pitiful, but there seemed no way of relieving it. In the latter part of the afternoon the crows took their departure, a sad, sable company, winging slowly southward.

The sun had not long been up, on this bitter Sunday morning, when I saw two hairy woodpeckers, blown or tossed, as it were, into the swamp by the fierce northwest wind. They wheeled and alighted on the trunks of two adjoining trees, where the sun struck on the northeast side. Here, somewhat protected from the wind, and

comforted by the slight warmth of the sun, they clung, hugging the bark, for an hour or more. I watched them closely, but could not see that they made any movement whatever after alighting. Neither of them once struck the tree with his bill. It was evident that they were there simply for shelter. I watched them until other arrivals diverted my attention. Several times during the day I saw them in the swamp, always occupying, or seeking, sheltered spots on the trunks of the trees.

The next arrival was a bluejay, who seemed to have more life in him, as he flew rapidly from tree to tree, springing his rattle and scolding vigorously. He kept up his vituperative language for twenty minutes or so, but finally, as if incensed at the total apathy of the other birds, flew away, to agitate elsewhere.

While the jay was still complaining, three flickers arrived, conspicuous in flight because of their size and their white rumps. I heard one of them utter his sharp, mocking cry (so like a loon's laugh, on a small scale), as they came dashing into the grove; but after they had alighted, at some little

distance from one another, they kept perfectly still. I saw one of them, a little later, make a short flight through the center of the swamp; but after that I did not get another glimpse of them. I think, very likely, they spent some time silently perched in the trees. The flicker is often very philosophical in this respect. He will sit at the base of a limb and meditate like an owl for a considerable time. But, if a human being appears in the vicinity, he utters his note of alarm and is off.

Besides the birds I have already mentioned, some snow-buntings and a junco visited the swamp, that cold Sunday morning, and seemed to find it a comparatively comfortable spot, remaining for an hour or more.

Occasionally, during the winter, a titmouse busies himself about the edges of the swamp, hunting for larvæ in the bark, or a purple finch, rarest of visitants, pauses conspicuously on a bare limb, to debate whether he will venture any further townward. But the list of winter birds visible from my window is necessarily small; and it is not until about the middle of March

that my note-book begins to show many entries devoted to my feathered neighbors. But some morning in March, just after a sugar-snow, perhaps, I wake with a thrill of boyish delight, to hear the sweet, brave, joyish cadenza of the song-sparrow, rising from the buttonwood thicket on the other side of the swamp. I get my field-glass and search eagerly for the little singer. Ah, there he is, a little grayish brown patch among the whitened twigs. How he pours out his jubilant soul, in tones as clear and ringing as those of some elfin violinist! One of the first comers of the bird-choir, in this section, his cheery song marks, for me, the real beginning of the bird-year, and fills me with that ever-fresh, keen, almost poignant longing, that comes to every nature-lover in the spring.

From that time on, my patch of wildwood begins to be a veritable bower of song. Every morning announces some new arrival, and there is a vivacious musical hubbub under my window, that reminds me of the reopening of a girls' school after the long vacation. Comes robin; comes scarlet-epauletted blackbird, choking with

gossip in the alders. The bluebird proclaims his return in the sweetest song of all. Then the delicate trilling of the field-sparrows and vesper-sparrows breaks into the medley. Then, toward the last of April, you hear the rich contralto of the brown thrasher in the depths of the thickening foliage. At last arrives the final section of the bird-express, crowded with the gay singers who make up the chorus—the wrens and wood-thrushes, the various warblers, the vireos, the orioles, the catbirds, the whip-poor-wills, the bobolinks, the pewees, the yellow-throats, the tanagers, the indigo-birds, and so many others that one almost despairs of keeping tally of them all.

Then what a pleasant place to sit, in the lingering, delicious evenings of May and June, is my study window, overlooking a paradise of birds! I lean back, as the soft, fragrant breeze steals into the room, and the feathered choir sings its vesper hymn, and give myself up to the joy of the love of nature. What a holy thing it is, this nature-love, what a pure, sweet, religious thing! You can not put it into a creed, or even into a psalm; but it lifts you, some-

how, until you feel that you are very near to God, and near to the heart of that which gives joy to immortal beings. I believe we shall never know, until it is revealed to us in the other life, how much the birds—the innocent, pure singers of the air—have done to lift humanity above its baser instincts, and make men more worthy to be called the sons of God.

BIRD-SONGS INTERPRETED

WHEN the bird-choir is in full song, as it is during May and June, it is interesting and often perplexing to seek to unravel the different phrases of melody, and distinguish them one from another. The beginner in bird-study will find this a more difficult task than he imagines. He will be embarrassed both by the confusion of tongues, the veritable Babel of songs, and by the fact that there are such slight shades of difference between the songs of several birds of allied species. The songs of the various sparrows, for instance, are much alike in general character, and it takes an ear trained to details to tell which is which. Add to these more general causes of confusion the fact that different individuals of the same bird family often have slight idiosyncrasies and variations of songs, and the difficulty of identifying our multitudinous summer songsters by their notes becomes trebled.

In my own endeavors to name birds from

their songs, I have derived much help from the somewhat whimsical translations that have been made by naturalists of various bird-songs into their corresponding English phrases. For instance, after reading Mr. Burroughs's charming description of the oven-bird or golden-crowned thrush and its song, I have never had the least difficulty in naming it from that sweetly intense, crescendo cry in the summer woods of "Teacher, *teacher,* TEACHER!" as if the bird were appealing with childish insistence to some prim, unheeding preceptress of a feathered school.

A boy once asked me: "What is that bird that sings so much in the summer, and goes, *Rickety-rickety-rickety?*" I identified the songster at once by the boy's literal rendering of its phrase, as the Maryland yellow-throat, and have ever since been unable to translate its song into any other English equivalent. So, if you should chance to catch, some summer, a rapid proclamation of weak-jointedness in bird language, you may jot down in your note-book that you have heard a Maryland yellow-throat.

The other morning I woke up at dawn

and heard a robin's early carol. The song presently adjusted itself in my drowsy brain to an amusing but very expressive and exactly imitative English jingle, as follows:

"Amelia Chow-chow,
Amelia Chow-chow,
Pretty Amelia,
Pretty Amelia,
Pretty Amelia Chow-chow!"

Now and then the bird varied its song by reversing the order of phrases. It would cry with sweet, ringing resonance, "Chow-chow!" Then there would be a pause, followed by "Amelia," or "Pretty Amelia." But the song was always some combination of the phrases I have named.

I have often tried to make English of the impassioned, choking melody of the bobolink, whose flute seems overfull of music, so that the notes trip over each other's heels as they rush out. But the bird's language is too rapid for distinct enunciation in any tongue. He is like a feathered Demosthenes with pebbles in his mouth. But, fortunately, there is no other strain like his in all birddom, so that it does not need

translation in order that the bird-student may know it.

The least flycatcher is another of our wood-birds whose note there is no mistaking. Not much of a singer is he, to be sure, with his dry, crisp, two-syllabled phrase. But you may know him, so to speak, by his destination, since all summer long he announces, with a curiously positive futility, that he is for *Quebec, Quebec*—a city he will never see, since early in October he is off for a climate very different from that of Canada.

The red-winged blackbird has a very rich and positive song, that is easily phrased. There is a reedlike quality in it, resembling the tone of a clarinet, and when the bird sits in the fork of a swaying alder, in some rank swamp, with his red shoulders flashing in the sun, and cries, *"A romp for me! A romp for me!"* you can not easily mistake his identity. But there is often such a chorus of these gregarious and sociable birds that the individual notes are quite lost track of, and you can hear nothing but a rich confusion of sounds, like a disorderly assemblage of contraltos.

The Baltimore oriole has a fine, clear note, but his song is of little variety. He sits in an elm-tree, near his pendent nest, where the hidden female broods her eggs, and repeats, *"Chuckie, chuckie, chuckie,"* all the beautiful June day. One wishes those exquisite notes could be prolonged into a song of greater extent and variety. Yet, even in their persistent monotony they add an inexpressible charm to the soft, fragrant air and blue skies of early summer.

Our night singer, the whip-poor-will, repeats a phrase which no one can mistake. I do not see how any one could imagine other syllables for it than those which have given the bird its name. Yet there are certain elided or obscured syllables in the song that are distinguishable only when the bird is singing near at hand—rough breathings, as it were, which, I find, many students of bird-language have never heard at all. While camping in the woods, I have often heard the whip-poor-will break into song within a few yards of my lean-to, and have marked without difficulty the grace-notes in its song. In its completeness, the whip-poor-will's lay goes as follows: *Whip (ah)-poor-will (ah).*

The *whip* and *will* are the two accented notes of the song, and after each of them the bird seems audibly to catch its breath in a quick, aspirant *ah*. The effect, to one who has never heard it before, is very peculiar and interesting.

The white-throated sparrow gets its common name (Peabody bird) from its plain reiteration of the syllables *pea-bod-y*. There are also two slight, initial syllables in the strain, which one writer on birds likens to *ce-ee*, giving in all five syllables to the song or phrase. The beginner will have little trouble in naming this sparrow from its note.

The first note of the bluebird's song corresponds with the first syllable of its name, a clear, smooth, open whistle, like *b-lo-o-o*. Then there are two shorter syllables, like *al-ly*. The song is of singularly sweet quality, but meager. Indeed, many of the birds which are accounted our favorite songsters have really very slight songs. It is the quality rather than the quantity of their vocal performance that gives them pre-eminence.

Different ears often hear differently, and I would advise every beginner in bird-study

to fix the songs of our common birds in his mind by the English phrases which they suggest to *him* rather than to another. It is remarkable how these odd, often whimsical, designations will stick in the mind, and enable a person to recall a bird's name long after he would otherwise have forgotten it. This is a kind of mnemonic system peculiary suited to bird-study; and, in addition to its usefulness, it affords not a little entertainment to one who grows skilled in the translation of bird-language into English.

THE MUSIC OF BROOKS

The birds and the brooks are the singers in God's outdoor temple. Other things praise God in other ways,—the flowers by their beauty and fragrance, the trees by their strength and shelter, the showers by their refreshing and fructifying power, the winds by their purifying and seed-scattering ministries. But the birds and the brooks are God's singers. This is their special service and delight.

The birds and their music have had many loving and sympathetic interpreters. But it is of the more neglected music of the brooks that I would ask leave to speak a few words here.

When I go out into the woods in the spring or early summer, one of the first sounds I hear is the dashing or tinkling of some happy brook; and it always seems to me as if there were real musical tones, and a song with living sweetness and meaning in the sound. To many people, I know,

brook-music seems like an unintelligible, confused babble and murmur, without the character and distinctness of the songs of birds. But I doubt if such people have ever listened very long and intently to the music of a brook. It is, in a certain sense, a more classic music than that of birds,—less distinctly phrased, and harder to interpret, but of deep and significant meaning. Let us sit down here on the bank, and listen for a few minutes to the music of this small brook that chatters over the stones.

Observe, first, how it does repeat, though with delicate and subtle variations, a certain musical phrase,—what you might call a motive or refrain. This phrase is sometimes prolonged for a minute or two, but it finally completes itself, and, if you listen closely, you will hear it beginning over again, running its course with other variations than before, perhaps, but, in the main, adhering to its theme, and rounding out the same musical phrase.

Now, to prove the correctness of my theory, take two or three large stones, and drop them into the water where it babbles loudest,—upon the sounding-board of the

brook, as it were. Sit down and listen again. You will notice that you have changed the music of the brook, that it is singing a new phrase, somewhat uncertainly at first, but gradually becoming definite and fixed, as the stones settle in place, and the water catches the keynote of the new obstruction. How often I have tried this experiment, for the sake of seeing how many different songs there are in the heart of a brook! It reminds me of the changed music of a life,—a life that meets new obstructions, new frettings, new trials, only to make a new song out of them.

But you will notice, further, that the tinkling brook has not only a rhythm, a metrical phrase, but a melody, due to variations of pitch. The notes run into each other more confusingly than in the clearly defined songs of birds; they have more of the sliding-scale quality, and remind one of the sweet, slurring, cascading tones of toy trombones. But there is actual melody in the music of the brook. It is a light-hearted, careless, somewhat indefinite song, like the extemporizing of a boy who whistles with an overflowing heart, too riotously

happy to be tied down to any conventional music, be it hymn or jig. But it is a song; it has rhythm and changing pitch, and runs its own liquid scale with sweet effect.

You will find a good many different phrases in this music of water babbling over stones as you go up or down the brook, but it is all the same song,—a song of the most distinct happiness and gratitude and light-heartedness, a real child-song, like the sweet, treble humming of a care-free boy or girl. I think the Master of the temple must love to hear this child-choir music. It must be as dear to him as the happy voices of our children to us.

But come now and listen to the music of another brook, a larger brook, that goes foaming down steep rocky stairways, in mighty columns and rounding cataracts of water. Its grand voice can be heard far through the woods, like the roaring of a great wind.

If the brook that tinkles over pebbles is the treble among God's singers, this roaring torrent in the bass. Or, if the former seems like a delicate-stringed instrument, this is the mighty organ. It is the grandest voice

in nature's woodland worship, that which gives it dignity and solemnity.

We shall find that we get very different impressions from this brook-music as we listen to it attentively. It is a magnificent rushing or pouring together of many sounds and meanings. The song of the smaller brook was a melody. This song is a crowded harmony, in which the tones are so many and powerful and difficult to separate from one another as to produce almost the effect of discord. It is like the tremendous blare of a church organ when all the stops are out and all the banks locked together and every great sub-bass pipe opened wide. All these tones of Nature's organ are in perfect harmony, but the blending of their highest volumes almost confuses and bewilders the ear.

Sit here on this bench of rock and listen to the multitudinous voices of the mountain brook, as it thunders from shelf to shelf. At times we seem to hear the shouting of a great company of men—deep, strong voices, like those of a crowd cheering or maddened with anger. Then we hear children calling to one another, and almost expect to see a

merry group of them climbing the ravine. Again, there will be a sound of wailing and sobbing in the rush of the stream. But above all and through all there comes to our ears the sound as of a lofty, triumphant chant, a *Gloria in Excelsis* pealing through cathedral windows.

This is the most impressive music of God's outer temple—this grand unison of the great choir and the great organ. As often as I hear it I feel anew that Nature is no less worshipful than man; that there is a strong religious element in the world of material things, not dependent upon man's perception and interpretation, but vital, independent, and self-sustaining. Nature is not only the temple of the divine, but her own conscious spirit worships therein, and joins with the spirit of man in uplifting the voice of praise and thanksgiving to the Father of all.

A CUP IN THE HILLS

"The Giant's Cup" is a crystal pond about half-way up the side of Saltash Mountain. The mountain is the giant, and he carries his cup at his belt, with a marvelous dexterity in keeping it always full and never spilling it over. There are about five acres of water in the pond (country people always measure water as well as land by the acre), and those five liquid acres are "planted," not with oats or corn or barley, but with trout—red-spotted, lusty, toothsome brook trout, grown to enormous size in the clear, pure, wholesome waters of the "Cup," where an abundance of food comes to them from the "leaching out" of the shores and the falling to pieces in the water of decayed and wormy logs. Ten years ago there was not a trout in the Giant's Cup, but some enterprising fishermen in a neighboring village leased the water and stocked it with fingerlings; and since then its fame as a fishing ground has spread far and wide, and

greatly esteemed is the privilege of dropping line and hook in its crystal depths for a day.

I shall never forget a certain June day spent on the pond with one of the village fishermen and his thirteen-year-old boy. The boy was always taken along by his father as a "mascot," and so thoroughly established was the old fisherman's faith in what he called "boy luck," that he told me he would "almost as soon think of going without bait as without Ned."

We started before daylight from the village as, according to time-honored tradition, one "must get to fishing at sunrise if you are going to catch them when they are biting." This same strenuous philosophy seems to extend to all enterprises in the country, and is, I doubt not, one of the thorns of the "terrible conscience for labor," which a writer ascribes to New Englanders. That there is any intrinsic value in the daybreak philosophy I am inclined to doubt, however; for, according to my observation, there is more nerve-energy lost between the first peep of day and a reasonable breakfast hour than is ever regained in practical results.

We had breakfast by candle-light, nevertheless, and rattled out of the village in my host's Concord buggy at four o'clock A. M. by my watch. A seven-mile climb up the mountain road, during which I alternately admired and pitied the muscular power and endurance of our horse, brought us to the Giant's Cup; and at half-past five we pushed the old flat-bottomed boat out from shore and dropped our lines into the pond.

The sun was just coming up over the glistening woods, and the birds were in full song. It seemed to me that I had never heard such a heavenly chorus of praise going up to God. My rod lay across my lap, my forefinger "stopping" the line just above the reel, mechanically awaiting the tremor which announces that a fish is nosing and nibbling the bait, preparatory to the twanging bite that sets every angler's nerves a-tingle. But for a time I forgot that I was fishing. My heart and soul were not in it, but caught up with the glorious morning hymn of the birds. On one side of the pond a hermit thrush was pouring out that inexpressible song whose notes can be likened only to a combination of the violin and

flute tones—the purity and sweetness of the one united with the smoothness and richness of the other. Nearer at hand a brown thrush was lifting up his less ethereal but more vivacious and buoyant song, and close beside him, like a kind of choir-master, a chewink beat time for all the singers with his clear, precise double note. A couple of vireos back in the woods were bidding each other a loving good morning; a robin (for there is plenty of robins in the New England backwoods) was trilling his idyllic matins from a birch top; and a song sparrow, like a piccolo player, pierced the chorus through and through with his fine, shrill cadenzas. Then there were the innumerable songsters in the background, whose notes could not be distinguished in the rich medley—a whole company of trained and sympathetic accompanists, like the finest orchestra in the world. Ah! it was enough to make one forget even the rare delights of trout-fishing in a mountain pond girdled with primeval woods. It was something worth getting up at three o'clock and riding seven miles through the damp woods to hear. To me it was ample compensation

for the fact that not a trout nibbled our bait until broad nine o'clock in the forenoon.

Now be it understood that trout fishing in a pond is by no means the same thing as trout fishing in running water. A trout conforms to his surroundings in many respects—coloring, for instance, and motion. In dark colored water a trout is dark skinned. In clear water he is paler, more golden in hue. In quick water a trout is quick of movement, impulsive, darting. In continuously still water he grows sluggish, leisurely, deliberative. Whereas a brook trout in his native element is the quickest of all fish to seize a bait, if he is going to bite at all, in still water he becomes the most tardy and conservative of the finny tribe. My host told me that he had sometimes sat from five o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the evening in his boat on the pond, and then got his first bite, after which he landed eight big trout in succession. So the reader will see that for a test of the fisherman's proverbial patience nothing quite equals pond fishing for brook trout.

We waited, as I said, until nine o'clock for our first bite; and then the boy, the mas-

cot, suddenly caught up his rod, which had been resting upon the side of the boat, and "snubbed," as the local fishermen say, with all his might. Instantly the slender tip of the rod bent in crescent shape, and the line began traveling back and forth through the water with that tremulous, erratic motion which proclaims to the experienced fisherman that a big fellow has the hook firmly bedded in his mouth.

"Pa!" cried the boy. It was the only word spoken. The veteran calmly drew in his line and laid his rod across the thwarts. Then he picked up the landing-net and stood waiting to see on which side the struggling trout would consent to be brought up to the boat. The boy was a cool-headed little chap, and he played his fish well. Several times he checked a rush for an adjacent snag, and once his reel sang out merrily, as he gave the big trout line enough for a slanting plunge straight down to the bottom. Then, inch by inch, he coaxed his fish nearer the boat, tiring him out meanwhile, until we could all see the broad-backed captive sailing near the surface, and now and then making a feeble effort to dive under

the boat. Suddenly the old fisherman dipped the landing-net, pushed it under the trout, and brought him up flopping in the meshes. A moment later he lay shining at our feet—a three-pounder and a "jim-dandy," as the veteran said. Whereat the boy's face shone like a polished apple, and he went to pinning a fresh worm on his hook.

So the sweet, still summer day slipped by—and we got that one big trout only! But how richly were we all satisfied!—the boy because he had caught a "jim-dandy;" the veteran because his faith in boy-luck had been vindicated, and by his own boy, too; and I because I had been all day close to the heart of nature, had heard the birds sing, had watched the sun building his grand arch over the wilderness undimmed by smoke, had drunk in peace to my soul and health to my body, and basked in the stillness where God delights to speak.

We rattled homeward at a lively pace down the mountain road, the sure-footed horse having little to do but guide the buggy and keep the jerking shafts from picking him up bodily. The boy nestled between

us on the wagon seat, with a far-away look in his eyes, which sprang, no doubt, from wondering what his mother would have for supper. Albeit we had enjoyed an excellent lunch on the "Cup," my own appetite made me a sympathetic interpreter of the lad's silence. The veteran smoked his pipe, drove with a sure hand, and talked exhaustively and discerningly of fishing.

"But I do n't know what I shall do when my boy wears out," he declared at last, pathetically. "He 's coming up pretty fast, and in four or five years won't be worth a shuck to fish—no more than I be."

Whereupon the boy grinned and thrust his elbow into the veteran's ribs. "O, pa!" he cried. And the old man winked at me over the tattered straw hat that bobbed between us.

IN THE HEART OF THE PINES

WHY is it that one who goes to the woods in summer almost invariably seeks out the pines, if there be any in the vicinity, and enjoys his stroll or his siesta under their shade, rather than beneath the canopy of the deciduous trees? There are several excellent reasons for this preference, I think. The first is, that the pine woods are undoubtedly cooler in summer than other woods. Their shade is more profound and unbroken. The air has a freer circulation through their lofty and open aisles. Then, too, the pine is an upland tree, growing by preference on high or rising ground where there is naturally more air stirring. Incidental to the greater coolness and better circulation of the pine woods is their comparative freedom from insect pests. This is no slight advantage from the rambler's standpoint. Again, there is that delicious aromatic fragrance of the pines, so especially noticeable in hot weather, when the

resinous juices of the tree ooze out and trickle down the bark in threads as pellucid as amber—a fragrance not only grateful to the sense and full of pleasant associations, but wholesome and medicinal in the highest degree. Furthermore, the open character of the ground in a pine woods is a constant delight to the rambler. His feet tread upon a smooth, springy carpet of pine needles, free from undergrowth, and his eye takes in wide perspectives of woodland beauty, ranging down the solemn and stately aisles of tree-trunks. And who is insensible to the charm of that exquisite æolian music of the wind in the pine-branches?—a music unequaled by any other forest sound, save, perhaps, the noble hymn of falling water. Last, but not least, the pine groves are the favorite haunts of our woodland songsters during the summer, and there we may confidently expect to see and hear most of the rarer varieties of wild birds in any vicinity during a day of quiet observation.

On many accounts, then, the pines are the ideal summer woods; and the writer has been well pleased to observe that, in many localities, especially in New Eng-

land, these trees are being spared when all the other trees about them are relentlessly laid low. In the suburbs about Boston, for instance, where the nature of the soil is favorable to pines, you will see scattered groves of these dark-foliaged trees crowning the hill-tops, rising majestically above the second-growth of oak and birch clearings, and even shadowing the roofs of handsome out-of-town residences. The pines have been spared—and always will be spared in the residential sections, I hope—because of their healthfulness and beauty, the charm of their wind-music, and the coolness which their shade affords during the summer months.

But to enjoy a pine woods fully you must get away from the suburban sections, from the vicinity of cities, to the real country, where you can find woods that lie deep and extensive—forests rather than groves. You must get into the heart of the aromatic pine wilderness, and spend a day with its ancient and rightful proprietors—the birds and squirrels. The best point of observation will be a knoll or bank, where you can recline at ease, somewhat

above the general level, with the branches of the trees below you nearly on the same plane with your eyes.

One of the first things you will notice, perhaps, is the summer nest of the red squirrel—a large, loosely built structure of twigs and leaves, among the uppermost branches of one of our pines. It is nearly as large as a half-bushel basket, and there is no attempt whatever at concealment. In this matter of residence our little friend chickaree is surely an aristocrat, for he has both his summer house and his winter house. This shapeless, loosely woven structure of twigs and leaves is his summer home—cool and ample; and here he raises his children and cares for them until they are old enough to scamper and forage for themselves. Then, in the fall, the whole family retires to its snugger winter residence, a hollow tree, where the winter's provender is laid by in a safe and convenient storehouse. At this season of the year the young are probably hidden away in the depths of that wicker-work nest in the pine-top. Chickaree himself you will no doubt see and hear, as he sits on a neighboring

limb scolding you and flirting his tail as he scolds. But he does not seem very much alarmed, for it is rarely indeed that any human being disturbs the red squirrel's summer residence. Most of the boys suppose them to be deserted crows' nests—at least that was the theory in my boyhood days—and no one but a boy would care to investigate the odd clump in the pine-top.

Here comes a little bird that is a great lover of the pine woods—one of our sweetest and shyest woodland singers. You almost need a glass to see him, he is so small and so incessantly active; but once get your eye on him, and you will not forget him, with his trim shape and pretty marking. This is the black-throated green warbler (why can't the ornithologists give him, and some others of his family, a less involved and less complicated name?), and if you will keep perfectly quiet for a few minutes you will probably hear his sweet, thin, and, it must be confessed, rather vague and characterless song. The shy, restless, and ever-vanishing little fellow seems like some spirit of the woods wandering through the branches of the dark old pines.

Strange as it may seem to those of us who have learned to think of it as a domesticated, house-loving bird, the phœbe is also a familiar inhabitant of the deep pine woods. The phœbe that builds in outhouses and under bridges is a corrupted member of the family, who, like the chimney-swift, has been enticed from the ways of its kind by the seductions of civilization. The original phœbe is a dweller in the deepest woods, and there you may still hear his sweet, plaintive song amid the sound of falling water and the soughing of pines. There is no difference in the physical characteristics of the two birds. The only difference is a change of habitat on the part of the semi-domesticated bird.

That ringing, bell-like song, which always seems to come from a distance, no matter how near the singer may be, is the song of the veery. How appropriate to the "dim religious light" in these solemn aisles of God's woodland temple! Nearer at hand, a Maryland yellow-throat is crying, "Trickery, trickery, trickery!" perhaps over some cuckoo's sly deposit of a found-

ling egg in the yellow-throat's nest during the latter's temporary absence.

The black-capped titmouse is still lisping among the pines—lisping much the same modest little song that you might have heard there in January and February, a monotonous, but sweet, "day-day-day," with an occasional vivacious variation, as if suddenly waking from a revery or breaking into bird-laughter — "chick-a-dee-dee-dee-dee." It is pleasant to find one of our native songsters which not only stays with us all the year round, but sings almost the same song summer and winter. I, for one, would rather have such modest optimism all the time, in all weathers and through all vicissitudes, than ecstatic rapture only when the sun shines and the winds are soft and balmy. Chickadee is the consistent Christian among birds; and if there is any bird-hereafter, he will surely have his reward.

Do you hear that far-off, throbbing, drumming sound, that begins with three or four slow, heavy beats, and then gradually increases in rapidity, until its staccato almost confuses the ear? That is the

drumming of the ruffed grouse, the prince of the pine woods. He produces the sound by beating his wings against his inflated breast, and it is at once a lover's summons and a challenge—a summons to the hen grouse, and a challenge to any rival cock who may be in the vicinity. It is one of the mysterious sounds of the woods, and you may hear it from April until mid-August, which represents the duration of the breeding season. Was it not Thoreau who said that no country would seem natural to him without the drumming of the ruffed grouse?

Ah! the spell of the deep pine woods—those etherealized bird songs, never so sweet and spiritual, it would seem, elsewhere; the inexpressible, soft, moving music of the pine-needles themselves in the passing breeze; the silence that sometimes falls, so deep and sacred and solemn; the holy gloom like that of some vast cathedral; the resinous fragrance rich as incense; the smooth, odorous couch and carpet of brown needles; the far-reaching vistas down a hundred aisles of stately columns! Beautiful and holy are the pine woods in summer—verily

a temple fit for the presence of God and for the soul's communion with him. Let the nature-lover tread these silent aisles with reverence, believing that if his heart and soul are open to the voices of the wilderness, they shall bring him some whisper of that Beneficent Presence who is over all and in all and throughout all his marvelous creation.

MIDSUMMER NIGHT SOUNDS

WHO that loves nature does not find joy in her amazing vitality and fecundity, her absolute unconquerableness? How mysteriously and potently she survives, in spite of the destructive encroachments of man! How she springs up about his very heels the moment he turns from trampling on her, and returns good for evil by covering his unsightly pathway with the mantle of her ancient beauty! She follows him back to his city walls with her luxuriant verdure, her bird-songs, her inextinguishable wild life of every kind. Such tenacity of existence! Such cheerful, hopeful, undismayed clinging to the primal gift of God! It gives one fresh courage for all good things, to see how nature triumphs over every abuse.

In midsummer, especially, the strong vitality and enormous fecundity of wild life reveal themselves on every hand. How rank the vegetation, how abundant the evidences of animal and insect life everywhere! You

may live within sound of the bells of a great city, and yet find yourself fairly submerged in the midsummer flood-tide of nature. Brambles and vines and weeds and wild growths of every kind will riot over your premises unless you fight them constantly; four-footed creatures will steal your garden vegetables and your chickens; and real country birds will wake you in the morning with as loud and glad a chorus as you can hear at the end of a mountain road. I take heart of hope in all this, for it assures me that, if I should live to be a hundred, I shall not see nature stamped out, even within the bounds of our most aggressive civilization. Massachusetts, the statisticians tell us, is the most densely populated State of the Union, with the single exception of her little New England sister, Rhode Island. And yet, in the most populous corner of Massachusetts, within ten miles of the metropolis of Boston, there is an annual revival of nature that is positively amazing. I could take the reader to at least a dozen spots, from all of which the city of Boston is plainly visible, where, if you do not take advantage of the highest view-point, you

might easily be persuaded that you were in one of the wildest corners of the Maine woods. Tangles without end, swamps, beetling rocks, groves of stately pines, rare birds, unpicked berries, solemn silence, not a roof anywhere to be seen—these are the abundant evidences of how nature can hold her own in the vicinity of not less than a million human beings.

But, best of all, take some still, hot summer night, and listen for the voices that prove the unconquerableness of nature, even on the outskirts of a great city. How many mysterious sounds float up to your open window—sounds made by wild creatures whose names you do not know, and whose presence you never suspected!

Have you never been startled, on a hot, breathless July or August night, by a scream so loud and harsh and angry in tone that your fancy flew at once to the panther stories that delighted your youth, and you were ready to believe that there was actually a prowling cougar in the swamp beyond the road? I have heard this wilderness-cry in the same moment with a Boston fire-alarm, and strangely mingling with it,

What was it—that sound so like the angry, petulant scream of a heat-vexed, half-sick child? It was only a tree-toad's night cry, rough, harsh, and penetrating. You will seldom hear the sound except on a hot summer night; but once heard, you can never forget it. I know of nothing quite so harsh and disagreeable among all the voices of the wild creatures. It makes a heavy, sultry summer night seem all the more unendurable.

Perhaps there comes up to your window, on some warm midsummer night, a thin, quavering, plaintive, long-drawn whimper. "What is that?" you ask. That is the cry of the predatory skunk. You will hear it in any locality where there is a hen-roost. That short-legged night-thief is on his customary rounds, and the chances are that he will pounce upon somebody's pet chicken before morning. Why he should announce his coming by that tremulous cry I do not know; but it is certainly a sweet and melancholy night-sound. There is something almost winningly pathetic about it.

The raccoon has a similar night-cry, only louder and not quite so tremulous. You

may hear it often when the corn is milky in the ear, and the "coons" steal out to gnaw and trample down the cornstalks, that they may get at the sweet young kernels in the husk. The coon-hunt by moonlight, with a good dog or two, is to the Northern boy what the 'possum-hunt of song and story is to his cousin of the South. How often have I lain, with my companions, in the warm sand bordering the cornfield, waiting with dogs in leash until we heard the rustling of coons in the corn, and that clear, whistling cry that floats so far over silent field and woodland. Then a wild rush up the edge of the corn, a crashing and clamor of dogs among the stalks, and in a few minutes we have the coons up a tree, where we can shoot them at our leisure.

Among the most mysterious sounds of a summer night is the "booming" of the night hawk. From far up in the sky a sudden hollow, rushing sound is heard, continuing, perhaps, for a couple of seconds, and then ceasing as abruptly as it began. This sound is produced by the night hawk diving from his lofty poise among the clouds. So like an arrow does he drop, for hundreds of

feet, that the air rushing beneath his hollowed wings makes a long, booming sound like the echo of a cannon's report among the hills. Again and again have I heard the night hawks diving in the dusk over the roofs and steeples of Boston, while I have been sitting at my open window of a summer evening. This diving and mounting again, I am inclined to think, is a gyration of pure physical pleasure, a part of the general playfulness of nature's wild creatures. The booming is a pleasant sound echoing through the hushed air of summer twilight; and no doubt many who have never understood its cause have listened to it with delight.

The bittern's *ah-unk, ah-unk,* is still another mysterious and agreeable sound of midsummer evening. It is like the sound made by the handle of an old-fashioned wooden pump, or the blows of an ax driving a stake in the swamp—hence the common name of the bird, "stake-driver." There are hundreds of bitterns in the swamps about Canton and Sudbury, just out of Boston. They are large birds, with an immense spread of wing, and fairly

startle you when they flop up, clumsily, just ahead of you, as you are skirting the marshes.

Both the woodcock and the English snipe, or Wilson's snipe, have a delicate, mysterious, and beautiful song with which they accompany their evening flights in spring and summer. You may hear it often above the marshes when you can not see the birds aloft in the twilight. It is a tremulous song, on a sliding scale from high to low, very plaintive, tender, and sweet. Indeed, most of these night songs and sounds have a plaintive quality and are pitched in a minor key—very befitting the hour and the associations, it would seem. Many of them are wholly mysterious, even to those who have heard them season after season. But for that very reason, perhaps, they are all the more affecting and charming. For I am thoroughly in sympathy with those who think that too much exact knowledge takes something of the romance and poetry out of our acquaintance with nature. There must be a certain indefiniteness, a certain hazy quality, in our knowledge of the outer world—we must not, in a word, know na-

ture too well—or we shall miss that elusive charm which pervades the poetry of Wordsworth, for instance. I am not sure but that we should be more appreciative nature-lovers if we did not feel obliged to identify and mentally catalogue every creature and plant we see and every song or cry we hear. However, modern nature-study is nothing if not exact, and if any old-fashioned rhapsodist makes a mistake of fact, he may be pretty sure of getting snapped up before his words are cold.

There are other night sounds, peculiarly characteristic of summer, which I should like to describe, if I could ramble on thus indefinitely—the loon's wild laughter, for instance, the fox's sharp bark, easily distinguishable from the shrillest yelp of a dog, the many odd sounds made by frogs on a summer night, and the varied hooting of the owls. But my disconnected chapter is already too long, and I must wait for another occasion to renew the subject.

COUNTRY ROADS IN AUGUST

I LOVE a country road, because it is free as the air, or as navigable waters, to all of us. You may wander along it all day, with no danger of being confronted by a trespass sign, or ordered out of the grass by an irate farmer. It is everybody's manor, everybody's shrubbery and aviary—better than the fields, too, for plants and birds, because free to them in the same sense that it is free to the rambler and the gipsy. The wild growths of the fields creep under the fences into the country roads for protection from the plow, the scythe, and the hoe. There they are safe, like helpless women and children who have fled from massacre to the walls of a bristling town.

In August especially the luxuriance and tangled beauty of the country road afford a striking and grateful contrast to the shorn desolation or nibbled barrenness of the meadows and pastures on either side. All the native plants, sheltered and un-

molested, crowd together in rustling masses between the roadway and the fence. Rank and tufted, they toss their plumed heads in the breeze, grateful that they have been spared to ripen their fruits and mature their seeds. Even the fences themselves are overrun with vines, upon which the fruits or berries already hang in ripening clusters. Yes, everybody's farm is dear to nature; and there she gathers, every summer, her broods of vagabond children, marching them in long lines of beauty up hill and down dale, across counties, States, and continents.

In this procession, or rather by its side, I also love to march during the warm, redolent August days, when you can fairly taste the innocent wild wines in odors of ripening berries, and feel nature's exultation and delight in emanations from bourgeoning fruit and pod. Verily, I believe that many of our most beautiful and familiar native growths of field and meadow would stand a fair chance of being exterminated, were it not for the refuge they find in the country road. Golden-rod, the gentians, elderberries, tansy, milkweed, primroses, cara-

way—how they are harried out by the farmer and driven to cover, as it were, along the sheltering banks of the roadside! It pleases me to see how well they are enabled to hold their own in these strongholds of the nomads, spite of scythe and hoe and fire. Something must be left for beauty's sake, O ye utilitarians! Let us not sacrifice all to the prose of gain.

A charming expedition for a nature-lover is to start out very early of an August morning, before the dew is off the grass or leaves, and strike into some little-traveled country road for a day of quiet exploration and nature study. Take a field-glass for the birds, and a small haversack for luncheon and unknown botanical specimens. Make no haste, but stop to rest in the grateful shade as often as your blood gets heated or your legs weary.

How fresh and cool and fragrant is this country air in the early morning, while still saturated with moisture and loaded with the earthy and vegetable odors which it has absorbed during the night! Whenever I feel that I am growing old, I bestir myself early of a summer morning, and tramp out

along some woods-edge, where the dew is glistening on the leaves and the brakes hang heavy and damp over black loam. Then comes up that magical, entrancing morning odor of the woods into my nostrils, and, presto! I am a boy again, with alder pole in hand, starting forth to fish the trout-brook in yonder hollow. That delicious matutinal woods-odor is the same the world over; and you may sate your soul and sense with it, if you are early enough, along any country road in August. There is something about it, I am convinced—even for those in whom it does not rouse old memories—that is tonic, rejuvenating, freshening. It is a fluid elixir of life. You feel, as you breathe it, good for a hundred-mile tramp, and you vaguely fear lest the country road shall dwindle into a squirrel track and run up a tree long before you are ready to turn around and come back.

Even yet, so late in the season as August, you will find some birds singing along the country road, especially in the early morning. There is a peculiar charm about looking and listening for August birds—because each lingering songster counts for so

much. The same kind of charm it is that one finds in looking for flowers under the snow, or second-crop raspberries in October. We may call it the charm of the unexpected.

What a delight, for instance, to hear, as I have heard, the silvery cadenza of a song sparrow along a country road, late in August! How springlike it sounds! How it carries you back to the morning of the year! And then the matins of the robin—that familiar warble that you hear so constantly in the spring—how refreshing to listen once more to the cheery strain, just before robin redbreast starts on his Southern pilgrimage!

You will find several of the denizens of the deep woods still in full song—the thrushes, brown and hermit, the chewink, the Maryland yellow-throat, two or three of the vireos, the cuckoo, and the yellow-hammer. The last two are not distinctly singers, but their harsher notes are so associated with the woods and upland pastures that, to my ear, they have a sweetness and significance not surpassed by the most perfect bird-melody.

But the characteristic August bird—the

one you can hardly think of without associating him with yellow grainfields and thistledown and katydids and locusts—is the little goldfinch, or "yellow-bird." What flocks of them you will startle into flight along any tangled country road in August! Away they go, billowing above the fields, with that peculiar undulatory flight of theirs —brilliant black and yellow males, and sober, greenish-black and yellow females—singing as they rise and fall on the air with a cheery chirp that one can never forget who has once heard it. I always have the "August feeling" when I hear a goldfinch—the feeling that summer is almost gone, that autumn is at the gate, with its harvest-crowned days and golden, moonlit nights, and winter only a little way behind, veiled in whirling snow and sealing the streams with its icy scepter.

As the goldfinch is the characteristic bird of August, so the golden-rod is the characteristic flower. And how the roadsides gleam with its barbaric plumes! There is a splendor, an Oriental richness, about the golden-rod that is equaled by no other

flower. It reminds one of the fringes and tassels of Eastern hangings. How appropriate its color for the days of blazing suns and ripening harvests! And then what a fine foil we have for the yellows of goldenrod, tansy, and primrose, in the rich purples of the gentians and ripened elderberries, the purplish-blue of the wild grapes, and the pinks of thistle and hardhack!

Ah! the subtle flavor of those wild grapes that hide in the shadow of matted vines along the country road! At home they would seem sour and astringent, no doubt, but how they pique and delight the palate of the thirsty rambler as he plucks and eats them fresh from the roadside vine! The bursting elderberries, too, distill what genial juices, what wholesome new wines, for the roadside pilgrim!

Happy is he who, with single heart and soul at peace with God and man, can spend a whole sunny day in the joy of rambling. How much to delight him, how much to instruct him, in the quiet, suggestive ways of nature! All that he learns that day will be at first hand, out of the earliest book ever

written, and all that he feels will be quick and fresh from the indwelling heart of Divine Love. Nature is a book that all of us may read, or at least dip into, with infinite profit. And not the least interesting of her pages, I think, are those which one may find scattered along the country roadsides when the chapter of summer approaches its *finis*.

A DOORSTEP SINGER

ALMOST every pleasant summer night, as a boy, I used to hear the mournful but sweet and tender songs of the whip-poor-wills from the wooded slopes around my native town. I learned to love the sound and to listen for it; and when I left home, as a young man, and went to the city to work, one of the things I missed most was the plaintive lullaby of these singers in the night. Even now, if I chance to hear the note of the whip-poor-will in an alien place, a feeling of the most intense longing and homesickness comes over me, and it seems as if I would give the world just to be back in my boyhood's attic chamber, watching the moonlight on the bare, rough walls, and listening to that voice from the hemlock hill.

But it was not always at a distance that I heard the whip-poor-wills in my boyhood days—or nights, rather. There used to be

one of them, at least, that was far more neighborly. He would come and sit on the stone step at the back of the house, and sing there pretty much all night. Occasionally, one of the family would get up and try to drive him away, but in a few minutes he would be back again, "whipping" as loudly as ever. Mother used to call him "our doorstep singer." It was rather disturbing, at first, his notes were so loud and penetrating; but we got used to our little musician after a while, and slept through his concerts quite unconcernedly. Since then I have heard of a good many instances of whip-poor-wills coming to sing on the doorsteps of farmhouses. The broad stone step so often found before the doors of country houses seems to be a favorite concert-platform with this mysterious bird. And how his loud, whiplike note does ring through the house on a summer night, when he sets up his song!

I often used to creep to the window in the hallway outside my chamber, on moonlight nights, and look down at the little singer on the doorstep. He seemed like a mere patch of shadow, as he hugged the

stone, in his coat of fluffy dull black and soiled white. He did not stir when he uttered his long-drawn note, and I used to wonder how he could make so much noise with so little apparent effort. The song was peculiar, heard so near at hand. There were two or three guttural or aspirant notes in it, a kind of gasping or gulping sound, entirely unnoticeable when the bird is heard at a distance. The "whip" and "will" were real whip-strokes of sound, with a lash and snap to them that fairly cut the air.

Now and then, in a spirit of boyish mischief, I would throw something down at the bird when he was in the midst of his song, and it was astonishing and amusing to observe how suddenly and abruptly he would stop and would dart away before the missile reached the stone where he sat. I used to hear others of the family laughing when, with a half-finished "whip" or "whip-poo," the ringing song would stop, like a violin note when the string breaks.

I must confess that the note of the whip-poor-will heard close at hand is rather harsh and disagreeable. It is much more romantic to listen to the song of this bird when it

comes from the woods a quarter of a mile away.

Though I roamed the woods a good deal as a lad, and whip-poor-wills were very plenty in our vicinity, I never discovered more than one of their nests, and, doubtless, would not have found that, if the mother bird had not darted away from under my very feet, just in time to prevent my stepping on her. The nest was a mere hollow in the leaf-mold of a beech thicket on a hillside. There was no pretense at nest-building. The clouded, faintly blotched eggs, two in number, lay on the bare ground in the shallow depression made by the mother bird. I did not touch them, but hastened away, lest they should grow cold before the mother ventured to return.

Once I found a dead whip-poor-will in the woods—shot, probably, by some sportsman who mistook it for a woodcock, as the flight of these two birds, when disturbed, is very similar. I was glad of the opportunity to examine the bird minutely, for I had never seen one closer than our doorstep singer. The whip-poor-will is one of the oddest looking of birds—a sort of ragged

minstrel of the bird-world, mottled all over with indistinct neutral colors, reddish brown, grayish black, and dirty white. The most distinct feature of its plumage is the white collar that crosses its neck in front. The mouth is surrounded with hairy bristles, which aid the bird in catching and retaining its insect food. The eyes are very large and beautiful, as is the case with all nocturnal birds. The claws are short and "stubby," and not fitted for perching. A poet once wrote some beautiful verses on "The Whip-poor-will," but the editor to whom he sent them, being somewhat of a naturalist, returned them with the criticism that he could not allow the whip-poor-will to "sway upon a bough" in his magazine, since the bird never did such a thing in a state of nature. As a matter of fact, while the whip-poor-will never does "perch" in the proper sense of that term, it does sometimes alight on fences and large boughs whose surface is broad enough for the bird to stand upon without grasping.

I was surprised, on taking the dead whip-poor-will in hand, to see how large it was. I carried it home and measured it. Its total

length, from the tip of the bill to the tip of the tail, was ten inches, and its wing-spread was a trifle less than thirteen inches.

The whip-poor-will is so retiring in its habits, and so seldom seen by day, that very little is known about its ways, even by the most experienced naturalists. If any one who reads this chapter has a chance to observe this mysterious bird, and will note its actions, he may be sure that the information thus gained will be welcome to any editor or any writer upon natural history. The chapters devoted to the whip-poor-will, in either popular or scientific bird-literature, are still rather meager.

ALONG THE LILY-PADS

UNDER the broad green leaves of the water-lilies, that fringe the edges of lakes, ponds, and slow-flowing streams, there lurks, during the warm months of the year, that watchful privateer of fishes, the true pike (*Esox lucius*), more commonly and incorrectly called pickerel. The real pickerel is a smaller, less distinctly, and brilliantly marked fish, of a dull greenish hue. It frequents the same waters and lurking places as the pike, and is, perhaps, equally voracious and gamy; but its inferior size and strength and duller markings make it seem less of a prize to the keen fisherman, who casts his minnow or his troll into the dark, still-flowing water. In rivers and large creeks the pike seems to exceed in numbers his smaller and weaker cousin, the pickerel; but where the stream is only a few yards wide, and flows between reedy borders, in

low-lying meadows, very seldom does the angler add one of the great spotted pike to his catch. His string or creel will be made up chiefly of the greenish grass-pickerel, ranging from a quarter of a pound to two pounds in weight, with, probably, a welcome sprinkling of large perch, which take the troll almost as readily as the pickerel itself.

There are two methods of fishing for pike and pickerel. One is to troll from a boat, rowed or paddled slowly and cautiously along the edges of the weeds and lily-pads, with a trailing line of from forty to eighty feet in length, to which is attached a polished metal spoon and gang of hooks. The other is the method of fishing from land. The angler walks leisurely along, at a little distance from the bank of the stream, so as to be out of sight, and casts his troll or bait with a rod. For small streams, where the use of a boat would be impracticable, fishing from the land is, of course, the only method; and some anglers, of active bodily habits, prefer it even for lake or river fishing, as being, on the whole, a more skillful

and sportsman-like method, furnishing both greater variety of sport and superior physical exercise.

But on a lazy summer day there certainly is a fitness and charm about fishing at one's ease from a boat along the lily-pads, waiting with a pleasant anticipatory thrill for the tug on the line that announces the strike of pike or pickerel—a charm that one misses if tramping along the bank in the sweltering sun. Even if the angler serves as his own oarsman, facing the stern, with the line gripped in his teeth, the exercise is necessarily so gentle and almost dreamily dallying, as to seem little more than a rhythmic swaying of the body, in harmony with the languid pulsations of air stealing over the meadows. The old and accustomed fisherman, by a kind of instinct or clairvoyance, divines the windings of the stream, and urges his craft noiselessly along, keeping always just outside the fringing weeds and lilies, that his hooks may not foul in them. Even the novice finds that an occasional quick, sidewise glance enables him to keep his bearings, and he soon acquires the art of feeling his way along, while his attention

is concentrated chiefly on the taut line that throbs and vibrates in his teeth.

The angler who has never fished with his teeth has missed a certain subtle, keen refinement of nerve-excitation that must be experienced to be appreciated. There is an exquisite delicacy and minuteness of report constantly flashing over the nerves to the brain. Every throb and quiver of the spinning spoon, every slightest obstacle it encounters on its way, the swing of the straining line across a bend in the stream, the impact of a reed or lily-stem along which it drags for a moment, the slight snap of the merest tendril caught by a hook, and the leap of the spoon as it is released, the very rush of the pike or pickerel from his hiding-place, and the preliminary shock of contact with the hooks ere the sudden tremendous tug of the strike itself—all these submarine secrets are telegraphed to the angler's brain through the delicate, sensitive nerves of the jaw, while he sits expectant, with his fifty feet of line between his teeth. I have heard it said that sometimes a fisherman loses a tooth when a monster pike grabs his hooks; but, if so, the man must either be asleep or of the

dullest and most phlegmatic nervous temperament, for I have never known an instance when there was not ample warning, from the initial contact of the fish with the spoon or minnow, for catching the line with the hand in season to meet the tug and surge of the strike.

Some fishermen use a very short, thick rod in trolling alone from a boat, laying the rod with the butt under one thwart and the tip over another, or holding it between the legs. I have also seen anglers carry the line at the tip of a small stick, about six inches long, which they held in one hand as they rowed. But it has always seemed to me that this method must impart an uneven and erratic motion to the spoon, and also make it liable to sink and foul.

The ideal trolling-ground is a small, deep, rather sluggish river, winding through low meadows, with now and then a lofty deciduous grove, deep with shade and coolness, or a wooded ridge thrusting down to the water's edge and breaking the quiet of the lowland scenery with a picturesque bluff or cliff. There is an indescribable charm about winding in and out, to and fro, with the sin-

uous meanderings of such a stream; the scenery constantly changing, and yet preserving a sort of panoramic unity and continuity; sunlight alternating with shadow on the still-flowing waters; the song of some hidden veery or sparrow coming to us out of the cool gloom as we drift along the woods; and in the broad sunlight beyond, the silence of shimmering meadows and the grateful touch of the breeze that brings to us the fragrance of new-mown hay.

Of such things as these, as well as the thrill and stimulus of healthful sport, is the angler's joy compounded. The secret of it all lies in being close to nature's heart, with something concrete, definite, and universally attractive to draw one and hold one there. Fishing is but half, and perhaps the lesser half, of the fisherman's delight. It is nature's mothering of him that makes him so childlike content. He casts his hooks for bass and trout and pickerel, and nature slyly and lovingly fixes to them the roses of the sunset, the diamonds of the morning dew, the invisible fragrances of the air, the sweetest sights and sounds and odors of the great outdoor world—all those things that

every normal man loves as his primal heritage. We go out and row a boat, or cast a troll, along the lily-pads, and whether the fish bite or not, with what a basketful and heartful of outdoor treasure we return! Be the layer at the bottom ever so thin, that which generous nature adds to our catch overfills the creel.

SEPTEMBER TRAMPS

When the first frost sharpens the air, then come new zest and vigor into the blood. The lover of nature no longer cares to lie on his back and watch the birds and the clouds. The horizontal has lost its charm for him, and he is eager for the perpendicular — the progressively perpendicular. Nothing will satisfy him now but a good, vigorous tramp. He must stretch his legs over hill and dale for hours at a time, rejoicing in the fresh energy breathed in sparkling air after a hoar-frost has whitened the grass.

Give me a crisp September morning for a tramp—none of those listless days while summer still lingers in the lap of fall, but one of those electric mornings after the first great change in the atmosphere that comes with the breaking of summer's backbone. It may be toward the last of September, or it may be at the very beginning of the month —seasons differ; but some time during Sep-

tember will come the first ideal morning to put on one's walking-shoes and start off for an all-day's tramp. Nothing less would appease that keen craving in your blood. The miles must ring beneath your walking-stick. It is a joy just to leave them behind you.

Everywhere there is delight for the eye. Nature has already begun her marvelous frescoing and tessellating process in the leaves of the trees and the herbage of meadows and marshes. From now until the last of October we shall dwell in the finest art-gallery that was ever opened under the sky. No human brush could possibly create, or even imitate, the splendor of these autumn colors. Take them either in the mass, or in particular and detailed effects, and they are as immensely superior to anything art can produce as sunlight is superior to lamplight. Take a single autumn leaf—the first red oriflamme of this maple, for instance—and study the texture of the coloring, the marvelously delicate gradation of shades, the richness and gloss of what we might call its *color-bloom* (something no human painting ever attains to), and the seeming transparency of the pigment. Put it under

the microscope—what beauty still! Your painter's leaf would be all coarse blotch and daub. And then imagine what the landscape is going to be a couple of weeks hence —a grand kaleidoscope of sunsets and rainbows. And this is nature's art-gallery that men abandon in September for the tawdry effects of city "exhibitions!" Nature would have admitted them free, and given them a catalogue, and invited them to an oxygen-party to boot!

If you want mountain views, you must choose a cool September morning after a heavy rain. The atmosphere of no other month can be washed so crystal-clean. It has seemed to me often to have a peculiarly magnifying effect, as if all that sparkling gulf of air that lies between you and the distant object were a vast, polished lens, concaved just right to make for you a cosmical telescope. I shall never forget the joy, the rapture, of some of those September mountain-climbs of my boyhood, when, in rugged Vermont, I scaled some familiar peak with my companions, after a night's rain, and beheld, as it seemed to me, all the kingdoms of the earth and their glory spread out before

my far-ranging vision. Montreal—ninety miles away—clearly visible from Mansfield, yes, even from Cobble Hill! The grand, ghostlike company of the Presidential Range in New Hampshire marching before me as I stood on the great cliff of Camel's Hump—what revelations for a boy who had never been forty miles away from home! Ah! those September mountain tramps, when the wine of the autumn air and the magnetism of frost sang together in my veins, and the heart of youth was so light that it seemed to buoy up the body like wings! That was the kind of Emersonian freedom and footlooseness that does indeed make the pomp of emperors seem ridiculous.

One is not much disposed to observe minutely, I think, on a September tramp. The last of the birds and the last of the flowers may challenge a somewhat languid interest, but for my own part I like to take things in the mass, in the aggregate, when nature's long season of emphasized individualism is on the wane. For months we nature-lovers have been burdening our brains and note-books with observations of concrete life in a thousand different forms. In-

numerable birds, flowers, insects, trees, plants, and four-footed creatures have confronted us at every step and stimulated curiosity and study. Now the birds have mostly departed, the flowers are a few and sedate company, the insects are frost-killed or driven into retirement, and I for one am tired of particularizing, and am glad to go back for a time to those free, buoyant, youthful impressions of nature as a whole. Instead of pulling to pieces single flowers I want to let my eye range over a whole living field of them, assembled in a carpet of purple and gold. I do not care to ask their names. I simply want them to make an impression of beauty and harmony and joy upon my spirit. I find a distinct relief in not following up every bird-twitter to some thicket to learn what bird is hiding there. The few songs the birds are still singing I will enjoy as psalms of gratitude, not as public exhibitions demanding some sort of analysis and criticism.

It is because of this larger and freer mood that I always look forward to my September tramps with special delight. I think then is the time when any man or

woman with a native vein of poetry is likely to get more inspiration out of nature than at any other season—simply because the foreground of this subordinate life is not so bewilderingly crowded, and there is more opportunity and more invitation to seek the large impression of nature —the *tout ensemble*. That is the impression out of which religious feeling rises. If we are seeking God in nature, we shall not find him so readily by analysis as by synthesis; not by minute study of individuals and particulars, but by free, joyous acceptance of the effect of nature as a whole. So, I think, we shall be justified in leaving our notebooks at home in September, and just abandoning ourselves to the influence of nature upon the spirit. Something better may come out of that than the discovery of a new plant or the identification of a long-sought bird.

In closing, let me "come down a peg," as the saying is, and make a few practical suggestions to the tramper simply as a tramper. It is a very different thing from strolling about for an hour or two in the summer woods, this starting off for a vigorous, leg-stretching, fifteen-or-twenty-mile,

all-day tramp. The first two or three jaunts will be terribly wearying. But do not get discouraged. The system soon grows toughened to such work. I have known semi-invalids, who at home were exhausted by a walk of a mile, to start on a trip into the backwoods and come out thinking nothing of fifteen miles a day, with a full backload of camp supplies. There is nothing dangerous about muscle-weariness so long as it does not amount to exhaustion. Keep on tramping, and you will soon gain the strength to tramp as far as you please.

Foot-gear is a very important matter with the pedestrian. If you start out improperly shod, and get seriously footsore in the beginning, it will be all up with you for the season. My plan is to wear the thickest winter socks as a sort of cushion for the feet, no matter what the season may be, and a pair of common-sense, *well-broken* shoes —shoes that I have spent months judiciously adapting to my feet. It is a labor of love, as well as of wisdom, to break in a pair of fall walking-shoes during the summer. You should begin with them as early as the middle of July, and then by the 1st of September

they will be as fine as silk to the feet, and if they were shoes of good quality to begin with, will last you all the fall for hard usage. Then have them tapped and heeled, and they will be as good as new—better, because already broken—for your spring tramps.

Wear light but warm clothing for fall tramps—never an overcoat, which is as much of an abomination for a pedestrian as rubber boots for a swimmer. A sweater is the ideal heat-conserving garment. That, with a comparatively light coat, will be sufficient for September tramps. Later on exchange the ordinary coat for a reefer or leather jacket.

These are commonplace hints, to be sure, but, as experience teaches me, of the greatest value. A fly can spoil your delicate ointment, and a sore heel or toe can dispel any amount of poetry and ideal enjoyment. And since the Pegasus of the rambler must always be "shank's mare," it behooves him to see to it that his steed is well shod and harnessed.

THE PATH TO JOE'S POND

It is first a road, a winding, clambering, stony mountain road; but long before it reaches Joe's Pond it dwindles into a foot-path, skirting the ridges, diving into the hollow to cross the brook, and sometimes making a dash at a ledge and going up over the top of it like a squirrel. Every foot of the way, from the edge of the village to the forest-circled pond, is a delight to the nature-lover with sound legs and lungs. A long, sweet, quiet walk it is, with the grand old hills before one, and the lovely valley behind—like going up the steps of God's temple with an offering of gladness and gratitude in one's heart.

To begin with, we cross the river by way of the open bridge, and look down at the wild water foaming between the rocks, as it leaps over the shoulder of the village into the mill-pond. Then up the valley, past scattered farms, with old Baldtop glistening in front of us, and all about him the lesser

hills like a group of half-grown children. The crisp autumn air invades our blood, and the damp smell of alders and black loam and decaying ferns refreshes the sense and fills the mind with a thousand sweet associations of bygone days. A bluejay utters his clear, metallic cry—that characteristic fall note—and memories of boyish nutting trips and squirrel hunts rush over us with a longing sweetness that is almost pain. See, there is the same old fence, zigzagging up the hill, where we used to head off the "grays" in their excursions from the sugar-grove to the cornfield; and the gnarled oak is still standing, half-way up the slope, around which we wound such circles of excitement, as with aching necks we peered for some sign of the frightened squirrel curled in a bunch among the topmost leaves. There!—do you hear the rattling roar of the old musket, as it hurls a handful of shot through the tree-tops? We 've hit him!—and down he comes, clinging and bumping, to strike the hard pasture turf with a thud—dead as a stone.

Above the lonely farms the way to Joe's Pond becomes a logging-road, rough with

rotting "corduroy," deeply rutted by the groaning wheels of the lumber wagons, and rolling and uneven as a path at sea. On the drier ridges we find the little round hollows where the dust-loving partridges have wallowed in the soil, leaving a feather here and there, or the etching of a spread wing to mark some sudden flight. And once in a while we hear a grouse boom away into the deep woods, so far ahead that we can not get even a gray glimpse of him. How shy these game-birds are getting, nowadays! Why, when we were boys, they would walk across the path like chickens in front of us, and then flop up into a neighboring tree, to look down at us and ask with their beady eyes, "Boys, where's your pole? Why don't you get one and knock us off?" The breechloader and the stealthy setter have been at work in these woods since the old days, and the birds have slowly learned wisdom. Now their education seems about complete, and it will take a crafty sportsman indeed to get within shooting distance of them.

Deeper and deeper into the woods plunges the old logging road. Now we have passed

the last piles of cord-wood, cut and stacked so long ago that they are crumbling to the very center with decay. How much of man's labor lost, how much of nature's beautiful garment wasted, in these lonely mountain wood-lots, where the Yankee farmer, with his inexorable conscience for work, toils through dull winter days, only to accumulate more of the fruits of labor than the world accessible to him can use, and so to leave good oak and birch and maple logs for the rains to rot and the worms to burrow! Everywhere, on all roads to Joe's Pond, or whose pond soever, deep in the woods of these remote mountain farms, we find the decaying woodpile, a monument to man's wasteful use or misuse of the bounties of nature. And meanwhile the brook that waters the meadow and the pasture dwindles in August to a sickly thread, and in April pours its sudden thunderous flood into the valley, devouring all in its path, a roaring, revengeful, merciless fiend. Such are nature's penalties for the improvident mowing down of mountain forests.

Beyond the last moldering woodpile we must travel single file, for now we are fairly

in the path to Joe's Pond. The wheel-tracks have been choked out by brush, and only a spongy, noiseless, winding footway leads up the slope toward the little sheet of water nestling among the hills. There is nothing utilitarian about this path. It is the trail of the fisherman and the rambler. The hands that blazed it and the feet that have beaten it out were no slaves to traffic or gain. Theirs was an enterprise of pure idealism. For the inextinguishable love of nature, for the satisfaction of an inward craving as old as the race, have they made this path into the heart of the woods, and gone to and fro in it. All who journey to Joe's Pond go in the same spirit—the romantic spirit of the old, free nature-life.

Impelled by that spirit, we are winding in and out among the solemn firs and hemlocks, treading the springy moss and mold of the ancient forest. No path is so easy to the foot, so stimulating to the muscles, as a good trail through the woods. The firm cushion of centuries of leaf-mold springs beneath every step, and the silence and smoothness of the path make walking seem like a kind of gliding or semi-flying.

The cool shadow of the woods, the pure, resinous, bracing air, and anon the music of some cascading brook, all speed the tramper on his way and make even the steep mountain-side an exhilaration and refreshment.

Such is the path to Joe's Pond; and were it not for the sudden, crystal beauty of the water, bursting upon the vision like a diamond set about with emeralds, one would sorely regret the ending of the trail on the lonely shore of the pond. But what can one desire to do, save to sink down on the mossy bank where the path ends, and gaze and gaze and drink one's soul full of the beauty of that sleeping lakelet in the hills, with Baldtop and the rest of the giants standing over its cradle in perpetual guardianship? Beyond is all a tangled and knotted wilderness, where one must fairly hew his way through fallen timber and interlacing thickets. But what does one care, since he has come safely and easily to Joe's Pond? He wishes to go no farther. Enough to linger there all the beautiful, silent September day, looking down upon mirrored woods and mountains, and looking up to shining

peaks and sky. If it be in season for the trout, of which there are none like those in Joe's Pond, one may venture out on every man's raft, if he will, and cast his fly across that perfect mirror. But whether the trout rise or not, he will be well content. For he has come from far to tread the path through the woods. He belongs to the brotherhood of those to whom nature is all-sufficient.

A QUEST OF FALL BERRIES

YESTERDAY I went berrying—not for any gratification of the palate or replenishment of the larder, for the time is late October, and the common edible berries are gone by. I went to gather a bunch of autumn bloom; for the wild berries are the flowers of the fall, many of them as brilliant in color and beautiful in arrangement as the spring and summer blossoms whose children they are. In October and early November the autumn woods and swamps and clearings are bright with patches of color, more conspicuous often than the clusters of flowers which caught the eye so pleasantly in May and June. You can hardly enter the woods or brush-grown clearings anywhere without being enticed on every hand by the sparkle of berries, red, yellow, purple, ivory-white, blue, black, brown, and orange. The reds predominate, and on all sides you see their elfin bonfires burning, some low down and half hidden, others like beacons blazing high

and clear. Autumn, with its frost-painted leaves and bright berries, has vastly more splendor of color than flowery June itself. The fragrance is lacking, to be sure; but for the pleasure of the eye give me a fall morning, after the first sharp frost. Then indeed one thanks God for the priceless privilege of sight.

My course led me first up a ragged slope, covered with low bushes and dotted with piles of brush. Half way up the hill I came upon the small, dark blue berry of the Solomon's seal, drooping gracefully from its delicately curved flower-stalk. The Solomon's seal is a plant that loves the shade, but it also loves and clings to the spots where its vigorous roots have established themselves, and will often linger in sunny clearings for years after the woods have been cut away.

Not far from the bed of Solomon's seal, I stumbled on a patch of hobble-bush, straggling over the ground and reproducing its short, thick roots at every few feet—a veritable net and trap for the unwary pedestrian. Its bright coral berries, however, betrayed it to me, and with a handful of them

I imparted the first dash of bright color to my basket of nature's jewels. Before I reached the top of the slope I had added also a cluster of the queerly-shaped, almost oblong, scarlet berries of the barberry, one of the commonest of our New England shrubs, though not, I believe, indigenous.

On the edge of the woods above the clearing, in a little depression where water had settled early in the summer and left the ground moist and soft, I found a fringe of chokeberry, thickly clustered with very dark maroon-colored berries, shaped like tiny pears. I do not remember that I ever saw a shade of color exactly corresponding to that of the fruit of the chokeberry. It is indescribable—dark maroon being the nearest approach I can make to definition. The milliners and dressmakers ought to adopt the shade and give it a name—as they have done in other instances where the botanist is their debtor.

I had scarcely pushed my way into the woods when, on a bank shaded by pines and hemlocks, the familiar, delicate tracery of the partridge-vine caught my eye, its perennially green necklace strung with scat-

tered scarlet berries, a favorite fruit of the ruffed grouse and bob-white, as its name implies. I added a string of partridge berries to my collection, and picked a few to eat, chiefly tempted by the looks of the berry, for it is dry and insipid enough, compared with its pungent cousin, the wintergreen berry. The absence of moisture in the partridge-berry makes it a good "keeper," and it is worth noting that not infrequently the berries of one season will be found mingled with those of the previous season that have kept their color and soundness all through the twelvemonth.

There is nothing more beautiful in the dark, deep woods than a clear, pure, ivory-white berry, like the creeping snowberry. I found an abundance of these shy creepers in a swampy spot overshadowed by tamaracks. The snowberry is not a common plant, because it requires certain conditions of soil, shade, moisture, etc., that are not often found in combination. But where it does grow it grows plentifully, and in the autumn scatters its ivory berries over the ground like little snowballs. Very pleasing to the palate, also, are these pretty berries,

with a taste somewhat like that of the wintergreen berry, though less aromatic. I gathered a good sized bunch of the vines, for one does not find many white berries in a ramble, and they add a delicate beauty to one's collection that is very desirable.

A large proportion of the swamp-loving shrubs and plants are berry-bearers. There, for instance, is that popular little preacher, jack-in-the-pulpit. I doubt if it is commonly known by those who are fond of this plant when in flower that it justifies itself by producing fruits quite equal to its springtime promise, and thereby proclaims itself superior to many an exhorter from a more pretentious pulpit. The brilliant scarlet berries of jack-in-the-pulpit make one of the prettiest bits of color to be found in the autumn woods. They are thickly packed together on the fleshy spike, and form a perfect mass of crimson under the hoodlike spathe.

The dwarf cornel is a swamp shrub that bears a bright red berry of edible and nourishing quality. The poison sumach has a rather inconspicuous, whitish berry, arranged in small clusters. The common

elder, though not strictly a swamp plant, loves low ground, and is oftenest found in cleared spots formerly mucky and swampy, where it lifts its dark purple, umbrella-like clusters of berries higher often than a man's head.

Everybody in our Eastern States is familiar with the common bog cranberry, that grows so readily and profusely along the New England seacoast in particular, wherever a piece of low-lying, waste land is sufficiently flooded or irrigated. During my walk I found a flourishing cranberry marsh in the very heart of the woods, the circular bed lying exposed to the sky like the bed of some pond long since dried up. If that was not its origin, most likely the spot was a cultivated cranberry bog in years gone by, before the woods had sprung up on the deserted farm. The common American cranberry, however, grows wild all over New England, and is mentioned by early writers as one of our native plants.

Skirting the swamp, I climbed a ridge beyond, that was all ablaze with the crimson plumes of the common or staghorn sumach, each plume a compacted cone of small,

round, hairy berries, pleasantly sour and acrid to the taste, and perfectly harmless. Was there ever a boy who did not love to chew the mouth-puckering sprays of the red sumach and flood his much-enduring stomach with the acrid juice? I picked four of the brilliant cones for my autumn nosegay. Then, descending the other slope of the ridge, I stopped by the tumble-down stone wall that skirted a mountain road, to gather a few of the thick black clusters of wild sarsaparilla berries brushing the stones. A little farther along the wall I found some bearberry bushes, a trailing shrub with evergreen leaves. There were but few berries on the low bushes, but these were a beautiful, clear, almost transparent red, and so pleasant in taste that one can readily appreciate the relish with which, in good old times, bears were said to devour them.

Climbing over the wall into the grass-grown road, I followed the faint wheel-tracks down into a little hollow where a brook crossed the road. On both sides of the stream the stone wall was covered with the twining, vinelike stems of the bittersweet, heavily fruited with deep orange

pods, whose curling edges revealed the scarlet seeds within. Intermingled with the stems of bittersweet, but climbing higher, and spreading even over the top of the surrounding thicket, were the vines of the moonseed, holding their scattered blue-black berries in small, loose clusters. I was pleasantly surprised to find the bunchberry growing close to the water's edge, just over the wall, and pushed my way through the vines to gather a handful of the pretty red berries, so like coral beads.

I found hawthorn and dogwood bushes growing by the sides of the road, soon after I left the brook. I was glad to get the beautiful light blue berries of the dogwood, so unlike any I had yet found; and the scarlet-spattered sprays of hawthorn made a fine display on top of the basket.

I found one other white berry during my ramble—the white baneberry, not as clear and transparent in color as the snowberry, nor as solidly white, as it is marked by a single obscure, cloudy spot near one end. But it is beautifully oval in shape, and hangs from the parent shrub in feathery clusters that delight the eye.

Altogether the prettiest of the many red berries in my basket were the delicate clusters of the mountain holly, which I discovered, just as I was about to leave the mountain road, in a thicket some rods ahead. The mountain holly is a small shrub with very light gray, almost white, bark. Its berries are borne in thick clusters, and are of the most vivid, clear, coral-like color, so bright and smooth that when you hold them up to the eye they seem almost transparent.

On my way home I added to my collection of red berries the fruit of the black alder, some clusters of red-berried elder, and a pretty little red berry speckled with purple —the berry of the false Solomon's seal. Of wintergreen berries, of course, I found a plenty also. Other purple or purplish berries gathered were those of the pokeweed and Indian cucumber-root. Only one kind of yellow berry rewarded my search, and that was the ground-cherry, which grows on a thick-branched, spreading plant, almost a shrub in size, and is curiously protected by a kind of loose envelope.

My ramble took me over a piece of country less than four miles square, yet I find

that I gathered about thirty different varieties of berries, all of them beautiful, either in color, form, or arrangement, and all worthy to be called, in the truest and most appropriate sense, the jewels which nature has made to adorn her ripened beauty as the time of its fading draws near.

THE AUTUMN WOOD-PATH

THE woods are never so full of interest and fascination as when the first frosts have touched the leaves, and purified the crisp, nipping air, and filled the forest with that expectant hush that follows the insect-hum and bird-music of summer. Then, as one walks along the quiet wood-path, he experiences again something of the vanished child-sense of fairyland. The forest aisles are full of mystery; the glint of sunshine in near-by glades and the flicker of falling golden leaves mingle like fact and fancy; and in the hush and glimmer and beauty of the scene one expects to see anything, from fairies dancing on the moss, to princes and princesses riding suddenly across the path, with plumes and jewels and jingling bridles. An enchanted place is the October wood. You wonder at the change that has come over it since the thrush and the vireo and the warbler packed their flutes and started slowly and silently southward.

Strange how grateful it is to the ear, sometimes, not to hear the birds singing! But it is because you have heard them singing all summer long that you can be pleased with October's silence. The sweetest song needs silence after it to fill the measure of its delight.

But the autumn woods have the bird cries, though not the bird songs. You will not have walked far along the wood-path before you are startled by that feathered alarmist, the bluejay. He hears you, or rather divines you, afar off, and makes the woods ring with his hoarse scream of warning. By and by you see him, plunging from tree to tree in short, scolding flights, absurdly indignant that you should have invaded his privacy, even so long after the nesting season is over. His is the cry that you will oftenest hear in the woods from now until snow flies. It is one of the audible accessories of an autumn walk; and though the jay's voice is essentially harsh, I have learned to love it because of its associations. This bird has two distinct cries—you could never call them songs, either in quality or variety of sound. One is the penetrating,

far-sounding, raucous scream that he uses when doing self-imposed sentinel duty; the other is a thin, short, metallic cry that sounds in the distance like the ringing of a small hammer on a blacksmith's anvil. The latter sound is almost musical, and, with its associations, soon grows to be inexpressibly pleasing to one who loves to ramble at all seasons of the year.

Another autumn bird cry, harsh in itself, but softened by surroundings and associations, is that of the crow—a restless bird always, but more than ever so when frosty weather has set in and pilgrimages, both long and short, are in order. He labors over the woods on heavy wing, cawing gruffly as he goes, without apparent reason unless it be to express his troubled and dissatisfied state of mind. Perhaps he is thinking of the hard times ahead—though heaven knows times are always hard enough for a hearty eater, with such thievish and forbidden tastes as his! No doubt his stomach is empty now, and he knows not where nor how to fill it.

Strangely enough, the almost domesticated robin, that has nested in the apple-tree

close to the house, and cheered us all summer with its flutelike morning and evening song, becomes in October one of the wildest and most suspicious of birds, retiring to the deep woods and adding its sharp, suspicious, chirping cry to that of the bluejay and the crow. I have seen whole flocks of robins, in October, miles within the heart of an upland forest, where you scarcely ever find them during the spring and summer. Shy, suspicious creatures they are now, taking to wing with great swiftness and clamor before the rambler gets even within gun-range of them—as if he would care to shoot such plebeian game if he could! But, like bobolink, who becomes the pot-hunter's reedbird in winter, robin seems to aspire to the dignity of becoming a game-bird as soon as the shooting-season opens, doubtless quite ignorant of the fact that nearly all our Northern States by a special law protect his russet body from destruction.

As the wood-path climbs a dry, sun-baked ridge, we come to a succession of little round hollows, shallow pits in the powdery loam, where that genuine and royal game-bird, the ruffed grouse, has lain, like a roadside hen,

dusting itself in the sun. A pretty sight it must have been—the large, grayish bird, with its alert, trim head and bright eyes always watchful, tossing the dust with vigorous flirts of the wing far up over its back, and nestling and shifting round and round in the warm hollow. I have seen hundreds of such dusting-holes in my rambles through the woods, but only once have I beheld a ruffed grouse actually dusting itself as I have described. It was at noon of a hot September day, and I was lying in the shade beside the wood-path, when the cautious bird stole out for its midday bath. It was a hen grouse, trim in body and graceful and quick in every movement. I lay motionless, watching her, for nearly fifteen minutes. Then a dog barked at the foot of the ridge, and the grouse was gone in an instant, leaving a few soft feathers swirling down into the dust.

How large a part of the life and interest of the woods centers in the birds! Every true nature-lover speaks of them first and chiefly when describing his outdoor rambles. Yet there are other creatures and things that win the attention of a rambler by the autumn wood-path. He notes the

nibbled shoots of birch and alder, where the rabbit or hare has browsed them by the light of the moon; for these little animals are both night-feeders, shy, big-eyed and big-eared, secretive and cautious, as behooves such tender, toothsome creatures, the chosen prey of man and beast.

Here, where the path dips down beside the brook, is a wet, flat stone, just abandoned by a muskrat (I heard his splash as I drew near) that was nibbling a wild parsnip. It would be useless to look for his hole, for it is well hidden under the bank, beneath the surface of the water, and slants upward to some dry, grass-lined nest above the water-line.

A little farther along I catch a glimpse of the dark, slim, lithe body of an otter, gliding rapidly over the stones to a deep pool, in which he vanishes. No doubt he has been fishing, in his quiet, patient way, lying by the water's edge, ready to pounce with claws and teeth upon any unwary trout or minnow that ventured too near.

It is curious how averse a fox is to wetting even the soles of his dainty feet! I was walking along this same brook, one Oc-

tober afternoon—this time with gun in hand —when a fox came trotting unsuspiciously down to the tip of a little point of land around which the brook bent like a silver triangle. He looked up and saw me as I was creeping down towards the base of the triangle, though still not quite within gun-range. The fox might easily have escaped me and saved his life by plunging through the shallow brook and up the opposite bank into a hemlock thicket. But rather than wet his feet he turned and came scurrying back along the water's edge, as far from me as he could get. It was a fatal bit of squeamishness on his part, for it brought the handsome fellow within range of my gun. I have a rug of his skin under my desk now.

I would like to say a word about the flowers one may find, even in October, along the wood-path and scattered over the upland pastures; but already my chapter grows overlong. I may simply name a few of the blossoms I picked, last fall, between the 1st of October and the 5th of November—fringed gentian, purple aster, golden-rod, blue toad-flax, fall dandelion, Canada violet, spurge, common yarrow, white alder, trum-

pet-weed, witch-hazel, moth mullein, knotweed, thorn-apple, and ladies' tresses.

The autumn wood-path, if you follow it far enough up the hills, comes to an end in a mountain pasture, surrounded by a tumble-down rail fence. And here we may fitly leave it, swallowed up in brakes and raspberry bushes. Nobody now living knows where it originally ended—perhaps at some old-time logging-camp far up beneath the shadow of Tahawus's peak, or perhaps it was part of an Indian trail that never stopped until it had connected Albany with the Algonkin villages on Lake Champlain.

UP STERLING

It was six o'clock of a clear October morning, succeeding three days of rain, when I set forth, "as the crow flies," for Sterling Mountain. I had long planned making a direct assault upon the giant, instead of going six miles around by way of "White Rocks" for the benefit of a doubtful trail. The thickly wooded mountain towered before me, seemingly less than three miles away, on the other side of the narrow valley. I thought I could easily make the base of it in an hour, or an hour and a half at the longest. But I failed to take into my reckoning the deceptiveness of distance when one is looking across country to the hills. Especially on a clear day the mountains look as if you could touch them, if your arm were only a little longer. You laugh at the notion of spending all day in making a trip by carriage to this or that locally famous hill. You think you could do it, afoot, between supper and

bedtime. But you generally live to try it and be undeceived.

My plan was to cross the river by a certain fallen tree which I had discovered on my last fishing excursion, strike directly over the wooded ridge beyond, then cross the great clearing visible from the village cemetery, and plunge into the wide fringe of woods around Sterling's base. From that point I would trust for direction to the rise of the land and my compass. When I reached the mountain itself, it would simply be a scramble, I admitted, for it was evident, even from a distance, that Sterling on the northeast side was decidedly "straight up."

The tree that bridged the river for me had been blown down during a September thunderstorm. It lay directly across the channel, leaving about twenty feet of shallow water to be waded, after one was compelled to slide from its tapering trunk into the stream. However, I count no mountain excursion complete—or for that matter possible—without wet feet, and was perfectly willing to comply with this condition at the outset.

Scarcely had I crossed the river when my

difficulties and perplexities began. The wooded ridge, which from the easy outlook of the village seemed like the mere threshold of my enterprise, proved to be a mountain of some consequence in itself, steep, tangled, and pathless. I was more than an hour in toiling up over its declivity and getting down into the woods on the other side. And even then I should have lost my way, had I not stopped to consult my compass every few minutes. For the first time I began to reflect on the wisdom of that whimsical but entirely credible saying, "The longest way around is the shortest way there."

However, I knew that, if I kept determinedly westward, I must come out at length in the big clearing visible from the slopes on the other side of the river. Once there, I should be in sight of the mountain again, and able to get my bearings. So I plunged on, compass in hand, wading through mossy bog-holes, climbing logs, battling with thickets, till I heard, far ahead, the welcome sound of a cow-bell. That meant either a clearing or a path to a clearing, and I struck out with new courage in the direction of the sound. Presently the

woods lighted up ahead in that peculiar way which betokens open country beyond. It is wonderful how far some practiced eyes can detect this dawning of the open, as it were. I have known woodsmen who could "intuit" a clearing half a mile away; and if you ask them how, they will say, "Do n't you see how the woods lighten up in that direction?"

Fortunately, the cow with the bell kept moving, so that by following the jangle I soon came where she was feeding in a little glade by a brook. From here there was a well-defined cow-path leading westward. I struck into it, and in ten minutes reached the big clearing which I had seen from the village. The clearing contained, perhaps, a dozen upland farms. Small buildings were scattered here and there, and I could see a road climbing the western slope. It was a remote settlement, but thrifty, I thought, as I marked the barns bursting with hay, the sheep and cattle scattered over the fields, and the big squares of harvested grain, showing, by the semi-circles in the stubble, that it had been mowed with the old-fashioned "cradle."

Sterling loomed directly ahead of me, its long ridge bristling with pines and firs, and its knoblike peak brushed by fleecy clouds. I debated whether, even now, I would not swerve to the left and make for the "White Rocks," where there is said to be a faint trail leading up the ridge to the peak. However, the thirst for adventure was not yet quite abated in me, and I decided to keep on as I had planned, straight up the pathless side of the mountain.

I followed the road across the clearing, until I reached the point where I thought I ought to strike into the woods. Then, leaving the last trace of civilization behind me, I took a final "range" of the peak with my compass, and plunged into Sterling's broad belt of forest.

For the first mile or two the ascent was gradual and easy. The woods, too, were more open and free from bogs and tangles. I walked with freedom, and felt a certain exhilaration in the relief from little physical worries and annoyances. The morning was rapidly passing, and I began to feel a sensation of agreeable vacuity under the belt—

agreeable because of the consciousness of an excellent lunch in my haversack, prepared by loving hands for just such an emergency.

An ice-cold brook, trickling over a ledge, decided the matter, and, though it was but eleven o'clock, I flung off my haversack and sank down on the mossy bank at the foot of the ledge to eat my lunch. That was a royal half-hour! With my drinking cup at my side, replenished often from the crystal cold brook, and my dainty but abundant lunch spread out on a snowy napkin before me, I reclined at ease, refreshing my inner man of the flesh with viands fit for a king, and my still more inner man of the spirit with the beauty of that unspoiled mountain forest, the low twittering of October birds, and the silvery tinkle of the brook.

While I was eating, a red squirrel came hitching down the trunk of a tree, and stopped on the stub of a broken limb to bark and scold at me. He was scarcely six feet away, and I playfully threw a bit of egg-shell at him. He disappeared with

chattering indignation, but presently returned and carried away the egg-shell in his mouth.

Up and forward again. And now began the real labor and difficulty of my enterprise. The ground began to rise abruptly. Ledges confronted me, some of which I had to skirt for a considerable distance before I was able to climb them. I soon realized that I was on the steep northeastern flank of Sterling, with a hard climb between me and the ridge that led up to the peak. But there was encouragement in the thought that I was fairly grappling with the mountain at last, that I had reached it by the air-line route, as I planned, and was adventuring where, perhaps, no white man's foot had ever trod before.

The character of the woods changed, as I progressed, from an admixture of hard and soft wood trees to wholly evergreen. Somber, thick-growing firs, pines, and cedars shut out the light and hemmed me in more and more closely. These were the trees which, as I had noticed from a dis-

tance, gave the slope and ridge of Sterling such a dark and bristling aspect. They were not large—not more than thirty feet high on the average—but sturdy, large-limbed, and thickly set, good types of mountain trees, which always give the impression of tremendous vitality and endurance—rooted among the everlasting rocks for more than a century's vigorous life.

On and up I clambered, sometimes squeezing through a narrow cleft in a ledge and scaling the treacherous pathway of broken rock within, sometimes drawing myself up a steep slope by overhanging boughs or shrubs, sometimes digging toes and fingers into the mold threaded with rootlets of underbrush, and struggling on hands and knees up to a vantage-ground where I could rest and catch my breath. I was thankful that it was too late in the season for tormenting mosquitoes and black flies, though the aggravating, invisible midges still tortured me with their burning bites. However, these pests do not drive one crazy, like a swarm of shrill-humming mosquitoes. If I had tried to scale that tangled slope in

early July, I verily believe I should have perished from the venom of the insects that abound in such spots.

It was just half-past two o'clock when I finally dragged myself up to the top of the ridge, utterly exhausted and out of breath. It was the hardest climb I had ever attempted, and I promised myself that I should not undertake another of the same kind very soon. There is sufficient satisfaction in doing such a thing once in an active life, I think. I could have gone around by the "White Rocks" and up the trail, with a mere fraction of the labor of my more direct route. "Choose the long way around," is a pretty good motto for mountain-climbers.

It was easy enough following the ridge up to the peak of the mountain. There was a faint path leading in and out among the rocks and the sinewy trunks of the stunted trees. Wonderful—is it not?—how a disused path will persist for decades in these mountain woods! On the summit of Sterling I lay down for an hour's rest, with my back against a rock. The view was grand, the rest delicious! I do not

know which of them was better worth my expenditure of time and strength. On the one side the White Mountains, on the other side the neighboring peaks of the Green Mountain range nearer at hand—all lay spread before me like a gigantic map. The air was clear as a bell. I could see, with my field-glass, to the utmost limit of unobstructed human vision. It was a grand sweep for a lonely, pigmy human being, with the sense of his own littleness and weakness emphasized by aching legs and back. But there I was, and there was the glorious world beneath my feet, and the unsearchable sky above my head. I forgot that I was tired; I forgot that there was a nine-mile homeward tramp awaiting me. For an hour I lay on the peak of Sterling, in exaltation of spirit and body. Then I got up, gave a last look north, east, west, and south, rubbed myself, and walked slowly down the ridge toward the "White Rocks."

GETTING READY FOR WINTER

THERE are two periods in the rounding of the year, in temperate zones, that are distinctively periods of preparation. One of them comes in the early spring, and may be called the period of preparation for fecundity, or reproduction. The other comes in the late fall, and is the period of preparation for struggle with environment. This annual struggle is a serious and strenuous necessity, and nature approaches it with evident reluctance and soberness of spirit and demeanor. There is something more than pure imagination or reflected human sentiment in the impression we get, in the late fall, of nature's all-enveloping sadness. Bryant only put into enduring words the actual mood of the outdoor world in November, when he sang,—

"The melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year."

Nature confronts her long, hard struggle

with the fierce storms and deadly cold of winter bravely, yet soberly. She sets diligently about making her preparations, yet the face she bends over her task is anxious and clouded. The least imaginative and least sensitive person can not fail to detect the sadness of the November atmosphere. It is as plain as the expression of any human face. You may see it stamped upon the skies, and the trees, and the waters, and the dun stretches of withered pasture. You may feel it in the glooming hush of the air, these short, overcast days, or hear it in the moan of tree-tossing winds, or the sobbing of cold rains in the night. No, it is not man's mood that nature reflects in the twilight months of the year; for man is not so depressed; he has no such strenuous struggle to make with winter cold, science and art having come to his assistance, in addition to all the resources of nature with which he started out. But dear old Mother Earth must still fight her environment with savage and primitive desperation. No wonder she is depressed, as she sits patching her familiar suit of armor once more. It is *her* mood that man reflects when he goes abroad

for his rambles over frozen November ground.

And yet, though nature dreads the winter struggle, she knows that it is wholesome for her. She knows, in the main, it will be a victory for her most vital forms; and that whatever perishes is simply so much of the weaker stuff of the physical creation tested, condemned, and swept out of the path of higher evolution. Natural selection is cruel to the isolated unit, but how kind to the associated whole! How it raises the average of all life, by providing for the unit-to-be a more vigorous parentage and a less vitiated environment! Yes, the hard places are wholesome places, in the end, for all life, physical or spiritual. God has written this fact very plainly throughout his universe, and he holds to it with an inflexible love that men sometimes call Fate. Yet I think we shall not always spell Fate with the same four letters.

It is beautiful, to me, to note the thoroughness, fidelity, and exquisite adaptation of means to end with which nature, in our short Northern clime, makes her preparation for winter. She is bound to save, at any

rate, all physical life worth saving, and firm in her faith that she can do so. Observe, for instance, how she safeguards the trees. First, she strips them of encumbering and storm-holding foliage — that which prostrates or snaps so many noble trees in summer hurricanes. Then she gradually stops the flow of the sap, so that as the cold increases the veins of the tree are drained, and it presents no point of attack for frost. At the same time the soft outer layer of new wood, just underneath the bark, hardens and forms, as it were, an inner coat of mail, a cuirass, to stop the spear of the cold. When you hear a tree crack in a sharp winter night, you may know that something has obstructed the complete draining of sap from its veins, and a drop or two somewhere has frozen and split the restraining fibers.

But nature does not stop with the faithful safeguarding of the parent life of the tree. She makes armor and clothing for its embryonic buds as well—thick, hard, overlapping scales (from which men got their first notion of armor, perhaps), a glutinous, waxy exudation, and sometimes an inner lining of woolly down, like a

mouse's fur. Thus does nature trebly swaddle the young life which is the hope of the future.

Turning now to the animal creation, note how nature doubles the coats of her children as winter draws near. The fur-bearers, in addition to the longer hairs of their jackets, produce a new and shorter and softer growth of hair lying close to the skin—a sort of undershirt, re-enforcing their heavier outer garment. With many of them, also, the color of the fur changes from brown or red to white, to correspond with the snow, and render them less conspicuous objects of prey. White, also, is a poorer conductor and dissipater of bodily heat than darker colors. Birds receive an inner coat of down on the approach of winter, and other changes take place in such of them as never migrate. The ruffed grouse, for instance, undergoes a broadening and indenting of the toes, by which it is enabled to walk on the snowdrifts and dig away the snow in search of food.

An almost unlimited number of curious and interesting adaptations of this sort might be cited, to show how carefully and

thoroughly nature prepares her children for their winter struggle. But this is a study to which I must refer my readers as a charming employment for fall and early winter rambles. The observing eye will find instances of this winter dressmaking, or tailoring, or armoring, on every hand. Nature will be found as busy in November as in April—perhaps more so, if we could count all her shifts and stitches. She has such a large family to tide over the winter! And, like all children, some of them will be careless and heedless in spite of all she can do.

BEYOND THE SNOW-PATH

HERE the hard-trodden snow-path of the woodchoppers comes to an end, in a clearing littered with chips and surrounded by piles of brush and cordwood. Beyond, the snow lies deep and unbroken. Striking into the wintry woods from here would be like taking a cold plunge-bath. I stand, undecided, in a little forest arena or circus, where the woodchoppers have stamped the snow while eating their frozen lunch. I have no snowshoes—indeed, I may as well confess that no amount of practice has enabled me to make any practical use of them. Their broad, snow-gathering blades have always proved, to me, an encumbrance and stumbling-block. And yet it is enough to make a man weaken, at the outset, across the hips and in the small of the back, to think of wallowing without snowshoes through two feet and a half of soft snow on the level. What shall I do? Turn around and go back to the beaten highway?

And thereby forego all possibility of discovering the hidden secrets of the winter woods? No! I will make the plunge. I will dare so great a labor. Though I may be able to penetrate the woods but a short distance beyond the clearing, I may find, in that trackless, undiscovered country, all, and more, than I seek. It is worth trying, anyway.

I strap my trousers tightly inside my high overshoes, and stride out into the white waste, sinking at every step above my knees. It is almost as hard work as wading through so much water, and the unnatural motion of throwing the knee so high, and lifting the body upward and forward, when the foot finds a resting-place, soon makes the back and thigh muscles ache desperately. I have known hunters who could keep up this rocking, camel-like motion all day, following a deer's or bear's trail, when the brushy, tangled nature of the country rendered the use of snowshoes both troublesome and dangerous to a man with a loaded gun in his hand. All physical feats, at least, seem to become possible by long practice and gradual induration of the muscular system—

even digging all day in a ditch, as Irish laborers do. But the sedentary man who tries his hand, or foot, at them can scarcely comprehend how muscles become so tireless.

I am especially desirous, on this crisp, midwinter day, to hear what songs or chirps we may expect from the few forest birds that linger with us, in these Northern States, throughout the cold weather. The piece of woodland I am traversing is well sheltered on three sides by hills, and is chiefly composed of thick clumps of evergreens, interspersed with more open patches of birch, beech, and maple, forming in all an excellent winter resort for the birds. And yet one might pass by such a piece of woodland, on a traveled road, and hear not a single bird-voice, though there were numbers of birds sheltered among the evergreens. My experience has been that these winter birds, as a rule, have to be disturbed or startled in some way before they will make their presence known by any vocal sign. None of them has a sustained song, and few utter more than a dry, pinched chirp or two, or a raucous scream, as the bluejay, when disturbed in their winter retreats. One or two

species, however, do give utterance to a brief musical phrase, the black-cap titmouse, or chickadee, for instance; and, more notably still, the winter wren, though the latter bird is comparatively rare, and its exquisite and copious winter song is not often heard north of Pennsylvania or Southern New York.

As I flounder along through the snow, I am soon greeted by five or six lively chickadees, that dart out of the evergreens with loud chirps, one after another, as if in sportive pursuit. Then the whole flock flits along from clump to clump of hemlocks, attending me as if for company's sake, and all the while keeping up that cheery three-syllabled chirping phrase by way of conversation. An old hunter told me that, if you will follow these birds, they will lead you to the spot where some ruffed grouse is hiding in the thicket or the snow, and so give you a shot at game which you might otherwise have failed to find. I suspect, however, that the old hunter's experience was a mere matter of chance or coincidence, having no more basis of certainty than this, that chickadees and ruffed grouse frequent the same kind of cover in winter—the thickest evergreen

clumps—and in following the smaller bird you are actually led to the best spots for discovering the larger, if there are any ruffed grouse thereabouts.

Yonder is a bluejay, screaming at me from the lower branches of a birch, at a safe distance, even supposing I had a gun concealed anywhere about me. I fancy that there is a note of scornful amusement, as well as petulant query, in his scolding cry, as if it really tickled him to see a man so foot-tied and absurdly hampered, toiling and panting through the woods, when the roads of the air were as free and smooth and delightful as ever. His laugh has the ring of superiority in it, but no kindly good humor. Now he is off, in full retreat, showing the white bars in his tail, and taunting all the while, like a vituperative but cowardly cur. I like the bluejay least of all our birds, summer or winter. He is a scolder from first to last, always imputing the worst motives to every human being who ventures into the woods, and proclaiming his suspicions loudly to the whole feathered community.

Soon after bidding the jay good riddance,

I fall in with that silent but beautiful winter resident of our Northern woods, the waxwing, or cedar-bird. The tiny red knobs at the extremities of the wing and tail feathers of this bird suggest umbrella-ribs with their tips covered with sealing-wax. Waxwing, so far as my experience goes, is quite dumb, a sort of Quaker bird in the woods, still waiting to be moved by the spirit of song. He has this peculiarity, which, I think, belongs to no other bird, that he can adjust his stomach at will to either a purely vegetable or meat diet. When the cherries ripen, he lives on nothing else so long as he can get them; but the rest of the time his food is entirely insectivorous.

While I am resting on the top of an old rail fence that runs through the heart of the woods, a white-breasted nuthatch bobs around the trunk of a pine-tree, scarcely six feet away; and, utterly oblivious or careless of my presence, runs diligently up and down the rough bark, seeking for larvæ or for hibernating insects. The nuthatch is the most *insouciant,* absorbed, and heedless of danger of all the feathered tribe. Either he does not fear man, or else he is so utterly

taken up with the serious business of life as to be quite unaware of his presence. I have almost taken them in my hand from the trunks of trees, when they were searching for food. Their chirp is a curious, amusing, dry sort of soliloquy, that reminds me of a very busy person talking to himself while at work, or singing a low, monotonous snatch of song. The bird's note is flat and metallic, like a diminutive duck-quack. I can not help smiling whenever I run across the unconscious, bustling little body, so loquaciously intent upon its perennial housecleaning.

While slowly making my way up a low ridge, covered with nothing but pines—and very good ones, too, considering how this tree is harried by the woodcutters—I surprise a bird that I little thought to find in this section, though it is said to be plentiful during the winter in Canada—the pine finch or pine siskin, an olive-backed bird, with a breast of smoky, dingy white. I get but a glimpse of it, as it pauses for a moment on a pine branch overhead, and then flies silently and swiftly away. It has a song during the breeding season, I believe—or

what passes for a song—but is silent during the rest of the year.

A pine grossbeak catches my eye, as I begin to swing around in a circle toward the woodchopper's path again, and soon afterward a genuine robin redbreast, bravely wintering near his summer nest. The honest chatter of my orchard friend sounds most grateful to the ear, though he is terribly suspicious of me now, and scurries away the moment I come in sight of him. He too would have remained entirely silent, this sharp winter day, had I not chanced to disturb him.

The soft, plaintive chirp of a kinglet arrests my attention, but I try in vain to discover the bird, which is doubtless well hidden in some adjacent thicket, and quite escapes the searchlight swing of my field-glass. I am by this time too tired to wade about and dislodge him; and besides, there would be little gained by it, after identifying the bird by his chirp.

As I reach the clearing once more, I am surprised and delighted to find a flock of snow-buntings in possession of it, perched by dozens in the brush-piles. Pretty little

fellows are these buntings, with their black heads and throats, white breasts streaked with black, dusky wings, bright yellow bills, and coal-black legs and feet. Away they go in a rustling bunch, as I step into the clearing, their infinitesimal chirp sounding like a chorus of tiny fifes. I wonder what brought them here into the woods, since they are commonly frequenters of the weedy pastures and the cleared hillsides? Perhaps some crumbs from the woodchoppers' lunch, long since scattered, and detected by these little foragers of the air, heaven knows how. But surely, if any creatures need omniscient senses to guide them to sustenance in this wilderness of snow, it is the delicate and tender and timid birds.

THE RECORD OF THE SNOW

Until the snow comes the book of nature lacks an index. You may walk for days in succession through familiar fields and woods without suspecting the existence all about you of scores of timid wild creatures, whose habit is to sleep by day, or who retreat noiselessly at your approach to places of cunning concealment. It is marvelous at what a distance the slight vibration of the ground under the human foot can be detected by the delicate, fear-quickened senses of the little inhabitants of the woods and fields. I sometimes fancy that they can hear me coming almost as far away as a boy can hear a train of cars when he kneels down and lays his ear to the rails. If, therefore, you live in a thickly settled part of the country, where the wild creatures are few in number and constantly harassed and terrified, you will be apt to think—until the snow comes—that your neighborhood is entirely deserted by the wilder small birds and animals. You

never see them when you take your rambles, nor is there any evidence to the unaccustomed eye that they have been there before you.

As a matter of fact, however, these suburban and much traversed sections of country are still peopled, as a rule, by a goodly number of their former small inhabitants. As a proof of this fact, take a walk two or three days after the first considerable snowfall of the winter. You will be astonished to find that this apparently soundless and motionless wilderness, this little desert of scrub oaks and pines, is fairly populous with small and active folk, who have plainly recorded their goings and comings on the soft, white surface of the snow. Your supposedly blank book proves to be a volume of most varied and interesting contents, of which a comprehensive index lies before you. In all directions you behold the telltale, wandering pathways of birds, squirrels, foxes, skunks, and mice. In certain spots it would almost seem as if there had been a carnival, a sort of winter fair or congress of sports, to which all the wood-folk of that section had flocked, so numerous and varied and

intricately interlaced are the tracks of the birds and foor-footed creatures. Such a medley of claws and paws! See, here is the path made by a whole bevy of quail, as they crossed the little clearing, "bunched" and huddled together, so that their entire track is scarcely six inches wide. The snow is trodden into a kind of fine lacework where they passed. They were probably on the run, as the quail seldom moves about at all save in a perpetual fright and haste after the breeding season is over. It is wonderful, for instance, how fast they will run before a trailing dog, keeping him on a constant crouching, gliding trot for fifteen or twenty minutes, before he finally overtakes them along the hot scent and "points" them or puts them to flight. These birds were not pursued, but they were running, as may be seen from the occasional scrape of an extended and balancing wing, and the length of the stride, where one of the bevy has for a moment strayed a little out of the file. I suppose no sportsman would think it worth while to go gunning in these well-scoured woods, so near the factories and the back yards of the little houses where the oper-

atives live; yet it would be no small sport to locate that bevy of birds with a good dog, scatter them in these fairly open scrub oak patches, and try a few stirring shots upon the wing, as the singles and doubles whirred away through the winter sunshine.

A fox has been across the bit of clearing, too—possibly in pursuit of the quail, as his delicate, clear-cut track parallels theirs. Think of a fox prowling about within a bow-shot of the outermost factory of a city of one hundred thousand inhabitants! not coming there by venturesome chance, but dwelling in the vicinity the year round, safely and snugly housed beneath some splintered ledge of rocks. He has this distinct reward of his temerity, that there are, as it were, two strings to his gastronomical bow—the wild creatures of his natural domain, and the henyards and chicken-coops of the mill-hands, under the very shadow of the encroaching brushwood. One good, fat hen will go as far as six quail or forty mice, be it remembered, and one such catch means two or three days of plenty and ease for Reynard in his burrow under the rocks.

You may know a fox trail in the snow by

its linear exactness. Every footprint is directly in front of the preceding, as if Reynard walked simply on two legs, set in the middle of his body, behind and before. How he manages to keep four feet so perpetually in line is a mystery. It must be with the same cunning, conscious intent as the Indian, who also makes as narrow and linear and inconspicuous trail as possible through the winter woods, and if he has occasion to come back that way, returns in his own footsteps, and so simply reverses the record.

In strong contrast with the cramped and timorous track of the quail is the bold, free, snow-scattering stride of a solitary old ruffed grouse cock, who, confident in his years of survival, has been abroad this very morning, and has but recently crossed the clearing, at right angles to the quail, as the freshness of his track shows. He does not proceed long in a straight line, but zigzags from bush to bush, and tuft to tuft, either for variety and amusement, or in search of food. He moves with freedom and boldness, but travels slowly and with many leisurely pauses. If we should follow his devi-

ous trail for fifty rods or so, no doubt we should hear him burst into thunderous flight far ahead and out of sight, for he is too old and experienced a bird to be caught within gun-range of a man, whether the man come stealing on like a hunter or not. Once let a ruffed grouse attain to years of discretion —say two or three of them—and I will trust him, particularly if he be a male bird, to outwit the sportsman in any locality. So far as guns and dogs are concerned, he will survive to a ripe old age; but I am not so sure of his ability to contend against the meager nourishment afforded by much-trodden, cleared, and stripped suburban woods, where scarcely a berry or any wild fruit ripens, that is not already marked and appropriated in advance by some factory boy or girl.

Everywhere among these scrub oaks and pines the white carpet of the woods is intricately patterned and traced by the tracks of the long-tailed wood mouse and the hardy, cold-defying red squirrel. Here and there you will see a little brown-mouthed burrow in the snow, where some squirrel has mined for a pine cone, dragged it up, and

devoured the edible part on the spot, scattering the coffee-colored chips about him as he eats. Chipmunks, apparently, do not venture forth in the winter, unless some unusually warm and springlike day rouses them from their nap and calls them forth for a bit of lunch to tide them over until April, but the red squirrel is abroad at all seasons and in all weathers. I have seem him breakfasting in the hemlocks, when the thermometer registered ten degrees below zero, and often in a driving snowstorm his welcoming, cheery chatter would startle me as I plunged through some evergreen clump, head down against the storm, on my homeward way.

For a greater part of the winter the short-legged skunk continues his diligent, predatory wading through the snow. You will find plenty of his dotlike tracks in these suburban woods. He is a mighty hunter, and a mightily persevering one, despite his dumpy, Dutch build and abbreviated legs. In the snow his trail looks like a succession of black-spotted dice cubes, laid side by side, so short and positive and ploddingly repetitious are his steps. It seems ridiculous

that such a creature can toil through the woods, and seize such swift prey as partridges and rabbits. Yet he does it, by virtue of his marvelously keen senses, the silence and stealthiness of his approach, and the lightning-like quickness with which he makes his final spring. The skunk is the snake among mammals, silent, slow-gliding, quick as lightning in the fateful stroke, and inexorable and relentless both in pursuit and capture.

We are fortunate if we find any report of the rabbit or hare in this snow record. Between the hunters and the foxes and the boys with their snares and traps, there is little chance for these delicate and savory creatures to survive. Perhaps, however, we may find where the last hare in the woods has leaped timorously across the moonlight on his broad, furred snowshoes. What a conspicuous trail he leaves—each padded hindfoot half as broad as a man's hand. But how he can skim over the surface of the snow, while other, smaller-footed creatures sink and flounder in it! If he escapes his many winter enemies, he may thank his snowshoes and his protective gift of speed.

Some day, however, when he is dozing in his form, under the genial warmth of the midday sun, a prowling skunk, driven forth in the daylight by hunger, will creep up and get him by the tender throat. And then, alas! there will no longer be a last hare in the woods.

A DAY ON THE CRUST

THE January thaw of 1887, followed by three days of intense and bitter cold, made possible for me a certain experience to which I look forward, each winter, as eagerly as the New England boy to Jack Frost's first skimming over of his favorite pond. We had been having snowstorm after snowstorm, until the earth was blanketed more than three feet deep on a level, and those who ventured out on snow-shoes had to look carefully for the tops of the fences lest they should trip over them. Then came the thaw, and after it the big freeze, leaving us with a crust that would hold up an ox everywhere except in the woods.

After a long embargo by deep and heavy snow, I know of nothing that so stirs the pulses of an out-door lover as the prospect of a grand all-day's walk on the crust. It is like a parole of a prisoner of war, permitted, on his honor, to go home and eat

his Christmas dinner. Advocates of snowshoes may claim what they please; I know, and every tramper knows, that carrying and operating these obstructions is hard, heavy, nerve-wearing work, not to be compared in physical effect with the light-footed joy of tramping over elastic ground, or striding across miles of gleaming, noiseless crust. The snowshoe is an occasional convenience, but not a source of habitual pleasure. I speak advisedly and from experience. There are a hardy and, I am tempted to say, bigoted few, who will stretch their elephantine trails across our snowfields every winter, and count it sport; but the fact that their number does not increase from year to year is sufficient proof that the sport requires qualifications, mental and muscular, not vouchsafed to the majority of those who enjoy out-of-door sports.

But if walking over, or through, soft snow is the most laborious form of pedestrianism known to mankind, a walk upon *hard* snow is positively unequaled for ease, exhilaration, and healthful delight. It is really next to becoming a Mercury *pro tempore* and having wings under one's feet.

No marble floor was ever so inviting to the feet, or as easing and stimulating to the muscles, as a far-stretching expanse of crust under a blue winter sky. It is so crisp and electric under foot, so full of spring and elasticity, so graspable and firm, with just enough friction in its surface to hold the foot from slipping and yet not detain it. Everywhere it undulates and sparkles before one, free from all abrupt inequalities, curving over the fences, and sweeping down into deep hollows like a petrified cataract. You may speed along with swinging stride, fearless of stumbling—over stumps, bushes, bowlders, over frozen brooks and marshes no longer treacherous, your whole body glowing with exercise, and your soul drinking in the strange crystalline beauty of the snow-bound world.

January 21, 1887, was a memorable day in the chronicles of my crust-walks. To begin with, the crust was unusually thick and hard, making it possible to penetrate on its surface deep into the woods, and enabling me to explore familiar haunts that I remembered visiting before only in snowless tramps. Then the day was perfect—

sky clear and blue as June's, and temperature just crisp enough to make the blood spin, without nipping ears and fingers. Unlike most winter days, this January day remained cloudless from morning till night, and the sunshine had a genial and prophetic brightness that thrilled one's heart with a faint intimation of spring. On the whole, it was such a day, outwardly, as one is tempted to mark with a red star in one's calendar, as memorable simply because of its charm of weather.

I left my house at eight o'clock in the morning, and struck out like a man relieved of all physical limitations whatsoever. Fences being everywhere obliterated, all my neighbors' back yards were as free to me as my own, and I forged away to the eastward over melon-patches, corn-fields, and vineyards that, only a few months before, were as sacredly guarded as the tombs of Egyptian kings. Then I climbed the broad, white ridge behind the town, and with a parting look at clustered roofs and scattered spires, swung over the crest and down the eastern slope into a wilderness of woods.

Here I soon found traces of some inhabitants with whom I am tolerably well acquainted, and who never seem surprised to meet me at any season of the year. The red squirrel had been chopping up pine-cones at his front door, and had left the chips lying about, for all the world like a woodcutter's litter. I saw several places where he had tried to scratch or gnaw through the thick crust, but it had proved too much of a task for him, and he had climbed a tree to see if he could find another lodged pine-cone. At length I heard him barking vigorously, and soon saw the flirt of his tail in a hemlock-tree across the hollow. He scolded me till I was out of sight; for I presume he held me in some way to blame for the fact that nature had temporarily locked up his provision cellar and carried off the key.

As I walked dryshod up the bed of a buried brook, my old friend, the ruffed grouse (the farmer boy's "pa'tridge") sprang up on thundering wings from a clump of sumachs. I turned aside to investigate, and found that the poor bird had been driven by hunger to make a meal off the astringent sumach berries, their purple

crumbs being scattered here and there over the snow. After January 1st the sportsman may be sure that it is dangerous to shoot and eat the ruffed grouse, for in the latter part of winter its food consists largely of buds and berries that embitter and poison its flesh.

When I came to the river I found the winter lodges of the muskrats all domed and shining with the crust. Some of them looked larger than a haycock under the mass of snow that had piled upon them. I cut a stout stick, broke down through the crust to the top of one of them, and rapped sharply on the roof. Immediately afterward I heard a faint splash, as the rats in the lodge dived from their warm beds into the icy waters of the river.

For two miles I followed the snow-covered bed of the river. It was better and more novel than skating. Then I branched off to the north, threading my way through the big swamp known as the "Dug-way," and had the good fortune to see a hare taking a nap in the sun under the roots of an upturned stump. He heard me about the same time that I saw him, and was off with

noiseless bounds. This was the first time I had ever been able to cross the Dug-way swamp on the crust without breaking through.

Noon found me at the base of Saltash Mountain; and there I lay down on the crust and ate my lunch beside the bowl of a crystal spring, deep down as a little well in its marbled hollow.

Swinging around in a wide circle to the westward, I then crossed the intervale marshes, now smooth and hard as a tessellated floor. In the distance I saw a fox nosing and digging about the tops of some buried tussocks. The hungry fellow knew all too well that there were fat mice housed beneath, but I doubt if he broke his fast on them.

Late in the afternoon I caught sight once more of the steeples of the town, rosy with the setting sun. The glow seemed a part of my own being, so full of physical exaltation was my whole body, after fifteen miles of glorious tramping on the roof of the snow. I was not the least bit tired—not perceptibly so, at any rate—and my blood coursed in my veins with full, warm cur-

rents. It was an outdoor's experience to be remembered with delight and gratitude—a red-letter day, such as goes into the journal of a nature-lover with something like a heavenly aroma clinging about it, a foretaste of the rapture possible for us when spirit and body shall at last be in perfect and eternal accord.

ON A FOX TRAIL

SOMETHING of the same charm that lures the explorer and the pioneer is experienced by the lover of outdoor life in following the trail of a fox through snow-covered country. I like to trace an unknown brook to its headwaters, or follow a grass-grown road until it fades away, perhaps, in some distant upland pasture, or "dwindles into a squirrel track and runs up a tree." Such an excursion smacks of adventure and of constantly renewed surprise. Expectation is on tiptoe with every step; one is sure of something fresh and new all the way. But best of all, I love to be the first one to follow a fox's road—after the fox himself. He not only leads you through a succession of the choicest bits of natural scenery, full of unexpected peeps into nature's most hidden corners, but makes interesting surprises for you in the report of his own adventures, so vividly recorded in the snow.

Go forth some crisp midwinter morning

after a recent fall of snow, and take a tramp over the hills beyond the town. If the snow is deep enough for snowshoes or ski, so much the better; you will have the pleasure of foxtrailing and snowshoeing to boot. I venture to say that you will not have tramped far beyond that zone of civilization represented by the outmost hen roosts before you will come upon the wiry trail of a fox. Indeed, it will probably be the first indication of wild life you encounter. The fox is the most traveled of prowlers, and will often cover from fifteen to twenty miles in a night, searching for something to stay his perpetually empty stomach. He does most of his foraging at night—not all of it, as some writers assume, for I have frequently seen him nosing about in the daytime. But as a rule his long hunting trips are taken under cover of darkness, and he spends the day napping, with occasional brief foraging excursions between naps.

This slender, dainty, inconspicuous trail, upon which we have chanced, was evidently made last night, while the fox was out hunting for his breakfast. It leads us first toward town again, and is soon boldly skirt-

ing the fences and outbuildings of the town dwellers, as if Reynard were hopeful at least of getting a sniff of plump, huddling poultry through the chinks of the henhouse. Two or three times we find where he has stopped and raised himself on his hind legs, with his forepaws up against a barn or hennery, hungrily sniffing at the toothsome fowls within. But he soon drops down again and trots disconsolately on his way, convinced by long experience that a fox has nothing to hope for from a modern henhouse. Yet almost every night he is attracted to it like a moth to a candle, and wastes much valuable time at the outset by courting the impossible.

At length, however, he leads away again toward the open fields, and we follow his straightening trail until we come to a pasture full of rotting stumps and logs. Here the fox has paused to dig for mice in the decayed stumps and under the logs. We sincerely hope that the poor fellow has picked up a mouthful, at least, to strengthen him for his midnight work, though there is no evidence of any tragedy among the mice. The fox has visited nearly all the likeliest

stumps, and the snow is covered with the chips and punk which he has torn out with teeth and claws. He must have spent an hour in this quest, for the snow is everywhere traced with his zigzag paths. But at last he gets off again toward the woods, as we discover by making a detour on the other side of the stumpy pasture.

For a quarter of a mile his track represents the shortest distance between two points. See how carefully he places one foot in front of another, so as to make the narrowest and least conspicuous trail possible. The Indian must have learned this trick from the fox, I think. It is an evidence of the same keen, crafty disposition.

Now we are in the woods, with the fox track winding in devious, looplike curves among the underbrush, bending toward every snow-covered bush or evergreen clump where a grouse or rabbit or huddled bevy of quail might be dozing. How softly and noiselessly those dainty, padded feet must have fallen in the feathery snow! No chance of any creature's overhearing Reynard, as he comes drifting through the woods with that peculiar, buoyant, floating

motion of his kind. Other senses must warn of his coming, if his quarry escapes.

And escape it does, in almost every instance, as the snow record proves. Only once or twice in my winter walks have I found any indication of a rabbit or grouse or quail caught napping and captured by a fox. The smaller woodland creatures seem to be possessed of an extra sense, a sort of intuitive detector of approaching peril, that warns them, even when they are sound asleep, of the presence of their natural destroyers. There seems to be a tiny alarm clock in their brains, or a gong of nerves, with sensitive filaments cast off in all directions, which detect in a mysterious way the prowler's approach and set the clapper a-striking.

See where this ruffed grouse was lying in a bowl-shaped cavity of snow, the sides of which, softened by the warmth of the bird's body, have now frozen to crystalline hardness. When the fox was still twenty feet away, as you see by his sudden leap, the sleeping grouse waked up and sprang from its couch. Observe where the first stroke of the strong wings beat down and

scattered the snow. How plainly you can see on one side the imprint of the wing-tips! The bird flushed directly out of its snow-saucer. There was no time to get a running start. The fox may have been in the air at the same time with the grouse. Time and again I have seen in the snow the evidence of such a marvelous escape. The fox rarely captures a grouse, though he comes so tantalizingly near it that it must make him grate his teeth with exasperation.

Our prowler did not get as near to this bevy of quail as he did to the grouse. You see where he began his jumps. The quail were standing in a close-packed circle, tails in and heads out. That is the way the cunning little fellows always sleep, presenting a cordon of watchfulness to an intruder who might approach from any direction. Their united intuition of danger detected Reynard before he was barely in sight by moonlight, and with a whisk and a whirr they were off together like eddying dead leaves.

We fancy there is a dejected look in the fox's trail, as it leads us again through the woods with its dotlike footsteps. Here we

wind down the bank of a most picturesque ravine, with a half-frozen brook tinkling at the bottom. Who but a fox would have guided us to such a charmingly wild, remote spot? Just beyond the rocky walls approach each other, and almost shut the brook in between them. There is just room along the left bank for us to follow the fox trail up the gorge. We must remember this spot next summer—if we can ever find it again without the fox.

Higher and higher through the ascending valleys and over the spruce-clad ridges the fox trail leads us, till we are fairly on the broad shoulder of Saltash Mountain. Presently we come out on a bare ridge just below the summit, and get a grand, sweeping view of snow-covered landscape, bounded by the lordly Adirondacks on the west. Here we must let the fox trail cool, while we sit down and eat our lunch and drink in the magnificent prospect.

As we rise to continue our way over the ridge, down whose opposite slope the fox trail disappears, a moving speck appears against the snow-covered side of a stone wall, nearly two miles away in a field at the

foot of the mountain. The smallest dark-colored object in that vast, dazzling expanse of snow is almost startlingly conspicuous. We bring a fieldglass to bear upon the speck—and behold! it develops into our wandering fox. He has just finished his long hunt, and is pawing the snow from a flat rock on top of the wall, where he expects to lie down and take his mid-day nap in the sun. We take turns watching him until he has made his bed, turned about five or six times like a dog preparing to lie down in a cold spot, and curled himself up with his great bushy tail wrapped around him like a blanket. There, at the end of his devious trail, we will let him lie, undisturbed, hoping that by this time his hungry stomach has been filled, and that he will enjoy pleasant dreams until darkness again sets him wandering over the white world.

WINTER WOODSMEN AROUND BOSTON

All winter long the sound of the ax rings in the frozen New England woods; for the ax is about the only tool of his trade that the industrious farmer can use, from December until April. Every morning you may see him driving his team toward the woods, or himself plodding along solitary in the sled-track, ax on shoulder, while the sun is still level with the tree-tops, and the hoar-frost is gleaming like diamond dust on the old rail-fence. There is a certain gipsy charm about this daily going to the woods and living under the tent of the trees, in touch with the mysteries and the secrets of nature. The farmer becomes, for the time, a woodsman, a pioneer, an adventurer, and the wild life in him revives, as if it had been merely drugged by more prosaic toil, and now starts up at the breath of the woods, keen, eager, zestful, and quick to all the sights

and sounds and odors and feelings that moved his ancestors in primitive and adventurous days. The man of the fields and the barns and the fireside is now a man of the woods once more, Indian-like in thought and action and habit. His step seems lighter and more stealthy, in the twilight of the trees, and his eye glances about him, more alert, suspicious, and penetrating. The ax in his hand is the only type of surviving civilization, and even that he handles as if it were gun or bow, shifting it from shoulder to hand and from hand to shoulder, as he walks, and often pausing to lean upon it, while at work, and listen like a hunter expecting his game. I have frequently come upon the wood-chopper in my winter walks, and, unobserved, seen him stooping to taste the partridge berry, or drag the trailing ground-pine, like a frost-bound rope, from under the snow. I have seen him stand motionless as a pine trunk, sniffing the air, and seeming to catch from afar some hint of the primitive life from which civilization has not yet completely weaned him. Again, I have seen him bending over the prints of the hare's

snowshoes in a tangled thicket, or, leaving his ax, creep upon a treed partridge, and perchance, by much tiresome craning of the neck, get a glimpse of her sitting on a hemlock limb, cunningly hugged against the trunk of the tree. That mere sight of the bird is as good to him as wine, and he goes back to his work with a glowing heart and fingers that itch for a gun.

Every farm, no matter how near the city, has, commonly, its well-husbanded wood-lot, that yields each winter some harvest of firewood and pleasant occupation to the farmer. Within five miles of the gilded dome of the Statehouse in Boston, I have found woodchoppers at work, apparently as remote and unspoiled by culture as in the backwoods of Maine. Last year I came upon a log camp in a hollow of the woods in Jamaica Plain, inhabited by four men, who were lumbering there, within sound of the Boston clocks, and belted all about by lines of electric railway. A little brook trickled under a corduroy bridge in front of their door, and there on a rude bench they sat, in the early twilight, smoking their pipes,

and looking up at the evening star, as they might have watched it over the shoulder of Katahdin, or where the moon strikes white on the great bare bluff of Monadnock.

There is something peculiarly grateful, to a lover of nature and the country, in these survivals of the primitive and rural under the very eaves of great cities. It is a refreshing evidence of the persistency and fecundity of nature. After all, the thoroughly artificial man, with his refinements and elaborate appurtenances, seems only an interloper. The country still ostracizes the city, and seems ever on the point of ousting it altogether, and taking complete possession of the land again. A little way from the close-packed suburban houses, the birches and oaks are rapidly covering the gashed knolls, and overshadowing the uninhabited "avenues" laid out by premature speculators in real estate. Who knows but, in a few years, there will be some profitable lumbering done in Roxbury and Dorchester and Somerville, as now in Jamaica Plain and Quincy? Perhaps the sound of the ax may again penetrate to the Statehouse

itself, and some farmer-legislator be able to keep tally of his wood-pile, in the pauses of public deliberation.

What rambler does not love the sound of the ax, in spite of the fact that it is all the time robbing him of his best-loved domain? When I enter the crisp woods, on a midwinter day, and hear its cheerful, ringing stroke pervading all the air, like the tap, tap of a great woodpecker, I feel a thrill of sympathy and companionship with the sturdy man, in felt leggings and flannel shirt, who is hewing out the chips somewhere yonder with his bright blade. The whole wood echoes with his firm strokes, and I seem to hear the comfortable, aspirant *ah, ah,* with which he registers each blow into the heart of the tree. It is hard to trace him out, for the sound seems to come from everywhere; but at length, trying this way and that, and stopping to measure the growing or diminishing volume of the sound, as one stalks a drumming partridge, I get his direction, and soon catch a gleam of his ax through the trees. As I approach, he willingly stops his work to chat with me, and I find, as I trusted, that

there is some real bond of brotherhood and sympathy between us—as indeed there must always be between two men who meet in the woods, else they would not have met there.

He tells me that he is hired by Mr. So-and-so, and has been at work on this "chopping" now for two months, daily; always working alone, and lunching by himself in the woods at noon. He has felled and split and piled about thirty cords, and begins to experience a distinct pride in this broad amphitheater among the trees, which he has made with his own hands. He is paid by the "job"—two dollars for every cord split and piled; and he will average a cord in two days. It is poorly paid work, but then he gets his board and lodging thrown in, and thinks it right that he should be paid by the job, because otherwise he might be tempted to laziness, alone there in the woods. He shows me his ax, proud of its sharpness, and tells me how he uses it to make reasonably sure that the tree shall fall as he wishes. The last few strokes, after the tree begins to crack and sway, are like the knocking away of the blocks

when a vessel is to be launched. He never runs when a tree is falling, but stands close by the trunk, and looks up, so that in an instant he may step this way or that, if the top leans in another direction than he expected.

He told me that he had no need of a watch to give him the time of day, because he clearly heard every hour struck by the big, deep bell of the town clock in Neponset, and on the other side the Quincy clocks kept him apprised, unless the wind blew too strongly from the north.

Here he worked in sight of the steeples of Boston, cording wood that had been growing there for generations—a true woodsman, with his lunch wrapped in brown paper, and no better acquainted with books, or even saloons, than a young farmer in the valley of the Penobscot.

After I left him I climbed a hill near by, and saw the thousand plumes of smoke waving over New England's capital, and marveled at the contrast. Here indeed was the country besieging the city, and well intrenched in her outposts yet. The ring of the rural ax mingled with the clang of

the metropolitan fire bells. At my back was a man cording wood, every noon eating his lunch out of brown paper, and washing it down with brown water from a swamp-draining brook. At my feet lay a city of six hundred thousand inhabitants, one of the greatest sea marts on the American Atlantic Coast, spreading its roofs and spires as far as the eye could reach, and wearing its great industrial cap of smoke like a giant at the forge. Where is the invisible line drawn between city and country? At what point in my walk do I cease to be metropolitan and become rural? What a strange and striking and delightful contrast of environments!—not to be found elsewhere in the world, perhaps, than about New England's fortunately situated and beautiful capital.

A PNEUMATIC CALENDAR

As I sit indoors, this fiercely cold December day, and listen to that peculiar moaning and crying of a sharp midwinter wind, the same mood comes over me that I have known again and again, in the time of nature's testing and pleading—a mood of sympathy and longing unspeakable, akin to tears—and I say to myself: "Ah! the crying of that winter wind. I should know what season it is, if I were waking up, with eyes still closed, from a century's sleep."

Have you never noticed it—how the sound of the wind betrays the season, and sometimes even the month, of the year? You may sit in the same room from January to December, with the air-currents striking the same house-angles, flowing through the same branches of near-by trees, sweeping over the same fields or up the same slope, and yet what different wind-voices and wind-messages you will hear, as

the weeks and months follow one another through the calendar of the year!

One may observe the same phenomenon out-of-doors, but not quite so distinctly or completely as in the house, because the house adds its own peculiar resonances and resistances, the harpstrings of its timbers, to the music of the wind. You have another instrument in your orchestra, another voice —and a leading voice—in your chorus, when you listen indoors to the vast symphonies of the air.

Here in this little upstairs workshop of mine, where I have sat in listening mood through many days and seasons, the wind has become an old and trusty news-carrier to me. He sweeps about the house and taps at my shutter, and I am told in a moment all I wish to know about the world I love best—the sincere world of nature. He tells me now, on this edge of coldest midwinter, that nature is crying, begging to be let out of the stocks of the frost, pleading, wearying, for spring. I have never heard that distinct, almost human, moaning of the wind at any other time. It begins about Christmas, and lasts until the 1st of February,

or perhaps a week longer, according as the season is backward or advanced.

Then, suddenly, my pneumatic messenger comes to the window with a fresh bit of news, or at least the likeliest of rumors. The February wind ceases to moan and cry. Nature has felt a strange, involuntary stirring in her prisoned members, and suddenly the air becomes full of questioning. The February wind is distinctly interrogative. Its voice has a rising inflection. It brings you a rumor, yet with the accent of conviction, as one may put a question in such a way as to expect and admit of but a single answer.

The first premonition of spring is a subtle tone of the wind—perhaps the most subtle of any; yet a trained and attentive ear can hardly miss or mistake it. I find that I have a different mood, at once, when the February wind begins to blow. Its first whispering may come in the middle of the night, waking me for gladness. I feel like one reprieved. The tension is gone; my spirits are unbent once more and at ease. The wind tells me that nature, who has not stirred a muscle now for more than

a month, is not frozen to the heart, but feels a little faintest pulse-beat, and sends instant news of it to her friends.

Almost any one may notice, I am sure, a difference between the sounds of the two winter winds—for there are two, as I have indicated. The first wind is painfully sharp and strained, and seems pitched in a minor key. The second is rounder and fuller and more resonant, with a certain robust quality, and rings out plainly in a major key.

The March wind, we might say, is the answer to the February wind's hopeful question, the absolute and jubilant confirmation of its rumor. The March wind is the most positive of all winds in the pneumatic calendar, and no one questions his ability to identify it, no matter under what circumstances it may be heard. He is a messenger, this March wind, who rides bareback and standing a string of a hundred horses, and sweeps more marvelously around the ring of the world than any spangled equestrian around his circle of sawdust. The roar of his passage and his hearty, reasssuring shout make the house rock; and when he is off

again you can hear him telling his good news in the next town.

April brings another voice to my window—a feminine voice now, with the child-tone still lingering in it. No wind in all the calendar is quite so soft as the April wind—when it is soft. But it has a querulous tone sometimes, and comes beating the window as with impatient child-hands. It is a moody wind, with all the changeableness of a child's temperament. It can cry and it can laugh; and there is nothing sweeter or more delicious in all the gamut of nature-sounds than the rustling laughter of an April wind among the first tender green leaves. Once listen with all your soul to its laughing or its crying, and you can never mistake the voice of the wind that blows in the month of showers.

May and June have the same sweet, constant, gentle, unvarying winds—feminine voices, but no longer childish, querulous, nor uncertain; voices that hint of the ripeness, the poise, and stability of womanhood. These winds make low, even sounds about your casement, and in the trees, and over the grass, all day long. They express na-

ture's utter contentment and peace. They bring me news of God's love for his world and his ever-reminding presence in it.

July and August are almost windless months. You must listen closely for your pneumatic news-bringer then, save when storm-breeding heats goad him to fury. He has little news now, save to whisper across your open casement that all is well with the fruit-bearing earth. Yet is not the whisper of the midsummer wind as distinct a voice, to those who hear it, as any in the pneumatic calendar? It surely is to me. I could never mistake its sound, and certainly not its touch. That evanescent whisper, that warm, soft touch upon the cheek—who could mistake them for any other wind's that blows?

The September wind is bland and yet firm. There is a return of masculinity in its tone. If it were not for this quality, one might mistake the sound of it for that of the May-June wind. It rustles the leaves a little more roughly; it strikes, in its occasionally boisterous moods, a more ringing note out of the house-timbers. Sometimes there is a faint wail in it, as if of half-

defined regret or momentary foreboding. But on the whole it is a cheerfully sober and somewhat quiet wind, that one loves to listen to while at work in a sunny room.

October's wind is the most uniformly sad of all. It blows in irregular puffs, scattering handfuls of golden leaves with every sigh, and sometimes shakes your window with an almost fierce and morose protest against the inevitable. I must confess that I like the October wind least of all. It is too petulant, too rebellious, too fitful. It is the voice of nature's first unreasoning, unchastened revolt against her annual testing and renewal.

With November comes a braver and saner wind, whose sound I like right well. It is the voice of nature's penitential mood, strong, sincere, and sweet. It roars through the trees, and strips them unhesitatingly of their faded leaves—not plucking them off in little reluctant, petulant handfuls, as did October's gusts. It rattles your casement, and tells you unequivocally and even cheerfully that nature is making ready for her winter struggle, and that you must promptly

get in your coal and put on your weather-strips.

So have I been dreaming of all the winds in the year, while I sit listening to the moan of this December weather. Every date in my pneumatic calendar has been checked off. Have they not strange, subtle voices, these messengers of the air? Yet I trust that other interpreters than I have heard the same unfeigned messages, and have caught somewhat of that inner meaning of which Alice Cary hints in her beautiful lines:

"Softly among the limbs,
Turning the leaves of hymns,
I heard the winds, and asked if God were there.
No voice replied, but while I listening stood,
Sweet peace made holy hushes through the wood."

WEATHER COMPETITIONS

It is a piece of that delicious wit, which flavors so much of James Russell Lowell's writing, when he alludes, in "My Garden Acquaintance," to the meteorological ambitions with which country people are so apt to be bitten—how each aspires to be hotter and colder, to have been more deeply snowed-up, to have more trees and larger blown down, than his neighbors. But I question whether Mr. Lowell should have limited this delight in weather competitions to country people; for is it not with a certain thrill of exultation that a city man opens his newspaper on a bitter cold morning, and reads that the mercury in his own metropolis shrank lower by a degree or two, at midnight, than in any other great city in the land? That was a distinct triumph which warms his heart with local pride, and in consideration of which he is quite content to have his ears and his nose uncomfortably pinched as he hurries out to

catch his car. Indeed, I have often wondered why newspapers publish this contemporaneous weather news at all—which everybody must know as quickly as the editors—if not as a sort of local challenge, a clarion cock-a-doodle-doo, as much as to say: "Ho, all ye worthy contemporaries, and inferior communities everywhere! Observe how we are freezing [or roasting]. Note the extremity of our temperature, and be duly humbled in spirit!" Americans, at any rate, will undergo great discomfort and inconvenience, as regards the weather, in the most cheerful and even jubilant frame of mind, provided they can feel that they have outdone, meteorologically, any rival community. And this local weather pride is fully as marked, I am sure, in cities as in the country.

But the country dweller, nevertheless, has more to be proud of, in respect to weather, than the city dweller. He can boast of extremer meteorological phenomena, and more of them, than the metropolitan. And being denied many other sources of local pride in which city folk rejoice, he naturally and properly makes much of his weather. It is

right that he should have, as it were, a prior and superior claim upon all sorts of meteorological marvels. It does my heart good to read, in country newspapers, in the dead of winter or the height of summer, those long, complacent paragraphs in which the editor, and his correspondents from all outlying hamlets and corners, chronicle the notable feats of the weather of the week. There is an unction and a deep, sweet, unenvious satisfaction about this class of literature, that endear to me at all seasons the columns of the country weekly. The news may be old—a week old, perhaps, when it reaches the outermost country subscriber—but it is none the less engrossing to all. The farmer, whose ear was frozen, very likely, three hours before the editor awoke to the consciousness that the morning of the day on which he penned his item was cold, will sit and pore over the news most absorbedly, five days later, in the midst of such a thaw that the plow would cut a furrow as easily as in April. It delights him as the record of a local condition which was, in a measure, unsurpassed and unprecedented—since last January, at any rate. It was an event, in a

state of affairs where most events in the round of the year come with one of the four winds, or are telegraphed by lightning, or heralded by the drums of the rain.

Yes, we shall have to admit that to the country, in the main, belongs the epochal phenomena of the weather. We must still go to the remote hill-towns for all our meteorological records and extraordinary happenings, with the single exception of summer heat. In that respect, indeed, the city excels, but it is by virtue of abnormal conditions, through which man artificially intensifies a phenomenon of nature. A hot wave raises the temperature of New York City from five to ten degrees above that of the surrounding country; but it is an adventitious supremacy, due to intercepted air, heated bricks, and blistering pavement. In no fair weather competitions would such conditions be allowed. Let the temperature rise or fall on its own merits, I say. And it is to the credit of the average metropolitan that he scorns to accept his mercurial advantage, in summer, as any legitimate triumph over his country neighbor.

But it is to the country that we must

turn for fullest zest in those weather competitions that are distinctively nature's own —the great snows and blows; the cold that splits the trunks of trees in the night with a crack like a pistol shot; the tremendous thunderstorms, when all the blackened day is tremulous with diffused electricity, and balls of fire dart hither and thither, and the incessant roll of the thunder is broken only by reverberating crash upon crash; the floods, sweeping away farmhouses, and barns, and chicken coops unwillingly navigated by cats; the earthquake shocks—unnoticed in the city's roar and jar—that break windows and old-time crockery, and send country women flying outdoors in terror. These are events in which the competitive American spirit may fitly exult—fit to be chronicled in country papers, and pasted into scrapbooks, and recalled from season to season with unwearied local pride.

I suppose I shall never forget the glory of being once snowed-up in a Vermont farmhouse, and having to help cut a way out, literally after the fashion of Whittier's snow-bound country boys. It was such a triumph over those of my own family who

remained in the city during the holidays, and reported a snowfall of six inches, with three days' resultant slush and slime! How easy it is for one who has passed through such an experience as Whittier's poem describes to appreciate the zest of weather competitions between country people, in different States, communities, farms! One never forgets nor ceases to boast of being snowed-up to the eaves, or half-drowned in a freshet, or knocked down by a thunderbolt that struck only thirty feet away, or miraculously preserved in a tornado that uprooted great trees all about. Such meteorological ambitions and rivalries are, after all, keener and grander and more wholesome sources of excitement than any we have invented for the stimulus of the city dweller. They have in them an element of the cosmical and stupendous; they are signs of a Divine Presence in nature; and when one pictures such forces contending one against another, he must feel as if he were witnessing in some sort a battle of the ancient gods.